THE DOLOMITES

GABRIEL FAURE

THE PICTURE GUIDES

THE DOLOMITES

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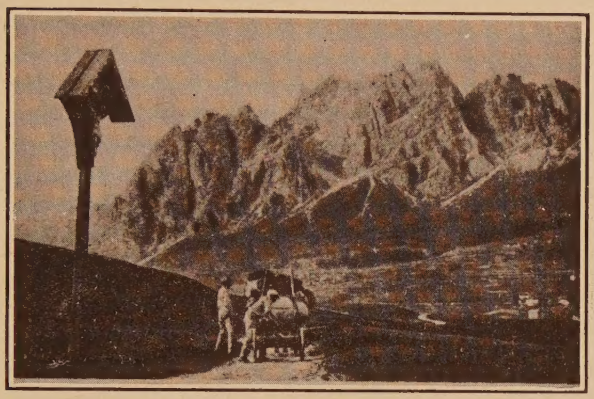
By GABRIEL FAURE



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TO

LA COMTESSE ISOARD-SAVARDO

Allow me, my dear Marie, to offer you, as a souvenir of our beautiful journey, this book written in your hermitage at BREGANZE *from which one may watch the Alps of the Veneto grow purple in the setting sun.*

G. F.

CONTENTS

	Page
The New Italy	9
The Neighbourhood of Bolzano	27
The new Dolomites Road	45
Cortina and the Lake of Misurina	69
From Cortina to Pieve di Cadore	89
The Land of Titian	102
The descent on Venetia	127

Monte Cristallo

Trento. — The Château of Buon Consiglio.

CHAPTER I

The New Italy

I had longed to see the Dolomites again, that region which is now entirely Italian. I was there in 1911 and 1912, while it was still under the Austrian yoke, and I was one of the first to travel over the splendid road which now runs from Bolzano to Cortina d'Ampezzo. The Italian aspect of this district and of many of its little towns, struck me so much that in an article I wrote for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* I called them instinctively by their Italian names. I wrote of *Bolzano*, the *Tre Cime di Lavaredo*, of *Pieve di Livinallongo*, instead of *Bozen*, the *Drei Zinnen* and *Buchenstein*. So hotly did the two nationalities vie with each other for possession, that nearly every town, valley, pass, river and peak had both an Italian and a German name. But how the critics of Berlin railed at me! Those

of Vienna even more so. They reproached me, a good Frenchman, with my ignorance of geography, for daring to question that these places belonged to Austria.

But I had not long to wait for my revenge, not nearly so long as I expected.

On June 3, 1916, I sent my first newspaper article to the *Figaro*,

Trento. — The Cathedral.

Le Canon à Misurina. Breaking my rule not to write in daily papers I was unable to resist celebrating the entry of Italy into the war. "Trento", I wrote, " the capital of the French department of the Haut Adige, must become the capital of the 70th province of Italy ". And a short time afterwards, in July, I wrote, " As we are now in the travelling season, I cannot resist making a solemn vow to go to Venice by the students' route, setting out from Bozen (which has now definitively become Bolzano) by the new Dolomites road which runs entirely through Italian territory ".

From Vicenza where I stay in summer, I could not resist the temptation of making that lovely journey. I went to Bolzano by Bassano and

Bolzano.

Trento, although I realized that the right way to approach it is by the Brenner Pass. No other route allows one so perfectly to appreciate the full delight of coming gently down on to Latin soil. It is an ideal route for the traveller who cannot enjoy the luxury of a motor car but must endure the miseries of the railway. It is the best of all the lines which cross the Alps to descend on Italy. In his *Promenades dans Rome*, Stendhal discusses which is the pleasantest route from Paris to Italy; he hesitates between the Simplon, the St. Gotthard, the Mont Cenis, even the route from Nice to Pisa by Genoa. He does not mention the Brenner, but

The Massif of the Pala.

View of Trento.

chooses the Simplon which leads most swiftly, he says, to the shores of Lago Maggiore opposite the Borromean Islands. But we cannot put the question like that to-day. When we now travel by the Simplon, the

Trento: Santa Maria Maggiore — The Organ Loft.

Trento. — The Dante Monument.

Mont Cenis or the St. Gotthard, we are too hurried to stop and explore the old diligence roads; in our feverish haste even the fastest expresses seem too slow. How often, rushing through stations without stopping, having barely time to dash from one side of the carriage to the other to look out on the wild banks of the Doire Ripaire, the picturesque Val

Trento. — The Cathedral Square and Fountain.

d'Ossola or the magnificent course of the Ticino, I have promised myself to come back and travel slowly over each stage of these once famous, but now deserted routes. For hurried pleasures are incomplete. One cannot fully appreciate the return to the gentle beauty of Italy, when, on emerging from a long tunnel, one's eyes, hardly re-accustomed to the light, are met by the suburbs of Turin or Milan.

But by the Brenner, with a little idealism, one can imagine one is following the old road of the diligence and the pedestrian, the old Roman *Via Claudia Augusta*. The train runs beside it, rises

gently to the summit of the very Pass itself, just as the diligences used to do, and then glides leisurely down on Bolzano, giving us time to drink in the beauty so lavishly spread before us. The true traveller is never hurried.

Col of the Tre Croci.

" Travelling ", wrote Mme de Staël, " is one of the saddest pleasures of life; to pass through unknown countries, to hear languages one hardly understands, to see faces which have no connection with one's past or one's future — that is solitude without rest, isolation without dignity. For the business of arriving where no one awaits you, the excitement of which curiosity is the only cause, give little reason for self-esteem ". Mme de Staël did not like travelling because she did not know how to observe. This clever woman, with her infinite appreciation of intellect, was curiously lacking in artistic appreciation. Her opinion is almost incomprehensible to us to-day, so greatly have tastes and customs changed. But we go to the other extreme. We no longer understand how to enjoy the present. We are always *on the point of*... But the days pass; we deceive ourselves; our good

The Tower of Penegal, Mendola.

Trento. — The Fountain of Neptune.

intentions come to naught. We live so much in the expectation of the future, that in the welter of desires and regrets, hopes and disillusions, we fail to harvest the delights of our passing lives. Our generation, no longer entranced by Lamartine's famous meditation on the Lake, does not feel the necessity of asking time to " stop its flight ".

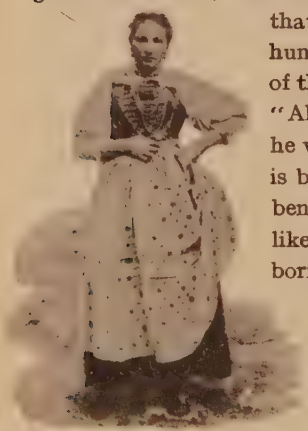
Bolzano. — A telepher ascent.

Having crossed the Brenner we feel as if we had arrived in a different world, as if we were living under a different heaven. I understand Gœthe's delight on leaving Germany where, according to Chateaubriand, *le soleil a mauvais visage*. For running down by this route, winding across meadows and

The Col of Rolle, the Massif of Pala.

Bolzano.

through pine-woods, everything is seductive, the soft air, the garlanded vines, the luscious fruit, the happy faces. It was here that the light of southern skies first charmed the hungry eyes and tormented soul of the counsellor of the Court of Weimar. His enthusiasm is touching. "All that struggles for existence in the mountains", he writes, "is here full of life and energy. The sun is bright and warm. One turns again to belief in a beneficent Power... I feel at home here, no longer like a traveller or an exile. I feel as if I had been born here, grown up here, as if I had come home after a visit to Greenland on a whaling expedition. I welcome the very dust which rises in clouds round my carriage, the dust of my fatherland which has been a stranger



A Peasant of the Val Fassa.

Bolzano — the Rosengarten Ridge.

to me for so long. Any of the natives, seeing my delight, would think me in my second childhood ".

Some may think Gœthe's delight childish. In the calm and equable atmosphere of the study, Montaigne's serenity seems more natural. Travelling from Augsburg to Venice he described Bolzano as " a town about the size of Libourne and not very attractive ". He only appreciated the wines and the bread, which was not unreasonable, for nowhere, not even in Paris, have I tasted better bread than in Bolzano. But how many travellers, driven from the Austrian Tyrol by rain and cold, *have* understood Gœthe's enthusiasm and like him have welcomed the very dust of sunny lands.

Ascent of the Croda del Lago.

San Martino di Castrozza.

How gladly, fleeing from a bleak Germany, they see the valley of the Adige with its porphyry rocks and greet the first glimpse of Bolzano, smiling in its green setting, the horizon closed in by the lacy peaks of the Rosengarten, that mountain called after a flower. For once I prefer the old name to the new one of Catinaccio.

In Bolzano one is already aware of a certain Latin grace. The town basks in the sun. Figs and pomegranates ripen on the slopes of its hills, at the foot of dark cypresses and evergreen laurels. The rich soil is fertile, the vines plentiful and of luxuriant foliage, the houses, and farms with their painted façades, the booths, the open-air markets, the very

A Gorge in the Val d'Ega.

Massif of the Sella.

language with its curious inflections recalls the Venetian lisp. And above it all the great blue dome, a sky at once intense and luminous. Everything is eloquent of the joy of life. To reach the heart of the Dolomites we must always return to Bolzano. But to-day we will stop at Trento, that delightful old town whose liberation I greeted with such joy six years ago.

Waterfall in the Val d'Ega.

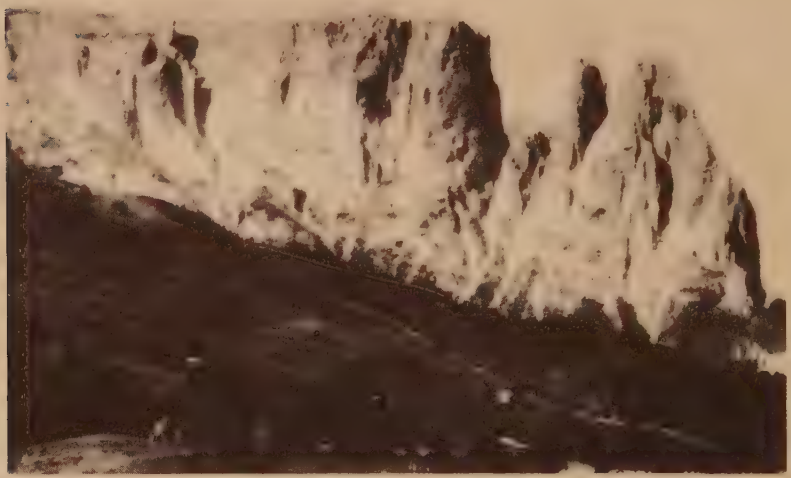
Trento, even more than Bolzano, used to fill one with unmixed delight at having left Austria. Everything there was Italian, even the names of the streets and the public buildings. It was difficult, for instance, to find the *Kommandantur*; the headquarters of the military governor were in the *Palazzo Pretorio.*

The Lake of Alleghe.

Shelter on the Sasso Lungo.

It was at Trento that Heine had his first revelation of Italy. He was almost frightened, he tells us, to find himself suddenly confronted by "those great Italian eyes, the eager, voluble life of Italy". In the Cathedral he saw ladies at their *Prie-Dieu* using their fans; it was such a fresh and charming impression that he declared Catholicism " a good summer religion ". In the Market, he had an amusing talk with a taciturn fruit-seller, but he declared that he could read, in the traces of beauty on her stern face, — as easily as on any old faience jar, that sentimental inscription so dear to the Germans, *Aimer et être aimé est*

The Rocks of Vajolet.



The Siusi Alp.

le plus grand bonheur de la terre. His whole surroundings enchanted him so much that he longed for a fly in the ointment. — "One is more voluptuously inclined to tears under these laurel bushes than under the sharp and spiky greenery of our own fir-trees."

To our less romantic imaginations, the Italian atmosphere is accentuated by the statue of Dante which seems to welcome us in the station square. This lofty monument has a symbolic value; it affirms publicly, almost insolently, the real nationality of the town and province. The verses of Carducci — whose bust now faces the Dante monument — would at any rate have dissipated all doubts in that respect :

Dante si Spazia da ben cinquecento
Anni de l'Alpi su'ltremendo Spalto.
Ed or s'è fermo, e par ch'asspetti, à Trento...

Hotel on the Lake of Carezza.

Lake of Costalavara.

" Nearly five centuries ago, Dante made his way over these terrible talons of the Alps. He stayed at Trento, *where he seemed to await...* " · Await what? If not his liberation, perhaps the expulsion of the usurpers, the flight of the barbarians from the other side of the mountains... On his stone pedestal, Dante was listening. He looks out today over Trento *redenta.*

This is not the place to describe the town and its buildings, its beautiful Roman Cathedral where I specially admired the double staircase which leads to the choristers gallery and the beautiful church of Santa Maria Maggiore, justly proud of its superb marble rails in the organ loft, the work of Vincenzo Grandi an artist of great talent. But one can hardly resist making

Shelter on the Sella.

a pious pilgrimage to Castello del Buon Consiglio, which testifies to one of the most odious crimes committed by the Austrians in the late war. I went to see the little Hall where the martyrs of the Trentino were sentenced — Chiesa, Filzi and Cesare Battisti, as well as the moat of the Castle where they were hung. Nothing could be more moving than the simple marble slabs which cover the mortal remains of these heroes. Nothing is more moving that the sad and serious faces of those visitors who come from all parts of the Province of Trentino to do homage to their countryman.

Nowhere does one feel the heart of Italy more than here.

Mendola.

Castle of Meran.

II

The Neighbourhood of Bolzano.

Bolzano is an excellent centre. There one can both enjoy the life of a southern town and make magnificent excursions into the surrounding mountains. The only difficulty is to choose between the many possibilities, for the traveller will find excellent arrangements for rapid and varied tours.

The visit to Meran is the first obligation. It is easily accomplished; one follows the Isarco, on which Bolzano lies, down to its junction with the Adige, whose course one then travels up for about 20 kilometers. Its green waters, extolled by Carducci, flow between two lines of wooded hills through one of the richest orchards in the world. Immense pear and

On the Dolomites Route.

apple trees laden with luxuriant fruit, alternate with vines whose garlands link the trees together in an uninterrupted chain. It must be a real fairy-land in spring, more wonderful even than the Rhone valley or Normandy, because of the amazing background of high mountains which here surges up on the horizon. To my mind there is nothing in Nature more moving than a tree in full blossom seen against a snowy peak.

The arrival at Meran is pure enchantment. I can well understand the Austrians' pride in this health resort, one of the loveliest in the world. The artist may perhaps not find enough to satisfy him, though the old town is not wanting in character. The Laubengasse is a street with a picturesque double row of arcades, more curious even than those of Bolzano or Trento. And here the contrast is more marked and more interesting, between the old quarter, which has hardly changed in appearance since the xvth century, and the ultra-modern town which, before the war, was the *rendez-vous* of the fashionable world, and of the neurasthenics of the Russian and Viennese aristocracy, — in winter and spring for the sun-cure, in Autumn for the famous grape-cure. Meran is an ideal

Vine Terraces at Meran.

place for rest as well as for luxury and amusement. Everything is planned to suit the tourist, but with a degree of good taste seldom met with in such cosmopolitan cities. The banks of the Passirio have been skilfully laid out in gardens where it is possible to find seclusion. Meran must be a Paradise for lovers; it is a town of soft, seductive moons, should the uncertain temperament of the young people require the soothing influence of environment. There are many romantic spots and one understands how others, besides the Empress Elisabeth, came here to seek relief from the weariness of life. One wishes the dreadful statue to her memory might have been spared us; it commemorates her visits certainly, but hardly evokes that enigmatic sovereign in whose passionate life, Love and Desire, Sorrow and Death, were so strangely mingled.

* * *

The most interesting excursion from Bolzano, and one which can be made in a day with a good car, is that to the Val Gardena and the

A Calvary near Bolzano

Val Gardena : San Giacomo.

Col de la Sella — a wonderfully diversified tour through varied natural beauties which succeed each other the whole way.

One sets out by the Brenner road, up the valley of the Isarco through magnificent gorges cut through great porphyry rocks. Everything is picturesque — old bridges, more or less ruinous Castles, curiously formed rocks. The unexpected and fantastic views which greet one at each winding of the road, seem always to have impressed the imagination of the natives and to have thus given rise to innumerable legends. Some of them were told me by my learned travelling companion, C. F. Wolff, justly called the poet of the Dolomites. Like Walter the famous singer, whose statue may be seen in the square at Bolzano, Wolff never ceases to praise the beauties of this country, the splendour of its mountains.

At Ponte all' Isarco we cross the river and leave the Brenner route. Two roads now lie before us. One leads quickly to the pretty village of Castelrotto which lies beautifuly situated at the foot of the Schlern group, crowned by the Santner peak named after the botanist who first climbed it. Beyond the village we come to Hotel Salegg, a charming

place where I have lived some of those hours in which life seems entirely beautiful and good. Few places are so attractive. But I must tear

On the Molveno Route.

myself away from this lovely spot, where I made a vow to return and spend several weeks — and which I shall probably never see again.

Having run back to Ponte all' Isarco, we now follow the road to the Val Gardena which takes us rapidly up through woods and meadows. Ortisei is a cheerful and prosperous village, the centre of a toymaking and sacred-figure carving industry which occupies several hundred wood people. We next pass Santa Cristina and arrive at Selva (the Wolkenstein of the Austrians), lying in a splendid setting of high peaks

The Lake of Molveno.

which an early frost has already powdered with snow. To the left we see the Puetz, to the right Sasso Lungo, and facing us the formidable mass of the Sella to which we push on, using from Plan a stretch of road made during the war. The Refuge of the Col de la Sella, at a height of 7217 feet is one of the best mountain huts I know, well arranged and standing in truly magnificent surroundings.

The Massif of the Pala

* * *

But the excursion to Trento by the Mendola and Madonna-di-Campiglio is even more beautiful and more varied. The road runs at first through the rich

In the Val Gardena

orchards of the great plain surrounding the confluence of the Isarco and the Adige. After crossing this river we begin to ascend by a splendid road alternately hewn out of the porphyry and passing through meadows and firwoods. As we rise, the view widens out over the valley of the Adige with its green hills, away to the jagged peaks of the Rosengarten and the Latemar which seem to soar more directly above us with every turn of the road. The whole valley and its surrounding foothills are covered with vines which grow so closely and luxuriantly that they form one vast green expanse, broken only by the bright flecks of the villages and the blue waters

Figlia della Rosena.

of the Lake of Caldaro. This is one of the loveliest panoramas of one's dreams, gracious as well as magnificent, and widening out as one approaches the well-known summer resort of Mendola (4470 feet). Owing to its vicinity to Bolzano this has for long been a prosperous and fashion-

Sella.

able place. It has palatial hotels as well as modest ones, and numerous villas in the forest, where one can enjoy the beauty of the woods and the countless resources of the mountain without needing to participate in the irksome conventions of fashionable life. Here, more than at most fashionable resorts, one can avoid that strange cosmopolitan crowd which only appreciates a place according to the

price of its rooms, its tennis courts and the luxury of its bars and ball-rooms.

The road now descends gently through idyllic country, passing the delightfully situated *Hotel de la Reine des Bois* near Malosco and Fondo, that large village whose two halves are linked by a bridge boldly thrown across a precipice. The gorges of the Novella which the road follows for a time, are most impressive, the rushing river foaming between precipitous rocks nearly 300 feet high.

We now leave the road to Clés which runs more directly to Trento and follow that to Malè, the capital of the radiant valley of the Sun (Val di Sole). As we pass through, it is full of the scent of new mown hay which the whole population seems engaged in tossing or loading onto carts.

After Dimaro, which stands only about 2460 feet high, we leave the Val di Sole to climb up by steep and daring windings, from which the view becomes more and more marvellous, the whole Val di Sole lying at our feet in the sunshine. Then suddenly, above the pines and

Rocks in the Sella.

Latemar.

larches, piercing the blue sky with its jagged arêtes, we see the Brenta, one of the most magnificent mountain groups imaginable. Descending through the forest of Campiglio, we cross a little plateau called the Camp de Charlemagne in memory of the extremely hypothetical journey of the aged Emperor through this region. And then we see the roofs of the Hotels at Madonna-di-Campiglio.

This alpine centre, standing about 5250 feet high, has a deservedly great name. Even though it is entirely composed of Hotels and villas and although its Palace Hotel is one of the most luxurious in the Dolomites, it seems delightfully rustic. It lies in the heart of deep forests, a few steps in any direction take one right into the woods. The views out on the Brenta with its constantly changing colours, its varied lights and shadows, are a constant delight. An infinite variety of excursions and climbs allows for the gratification of every taste, that of the modest walker as well as of the most daring alpinist.

After leaving Madonna-di-Campiglio, the road descends through meadows and woods, all so perfectly laid out that one imagines oneself

The Mendola Pass.

The Danse Macabre at Pinzolo.

in some magnificent private park. Through the branches of the trees the soaring peaks of the Brenta offer a series of incomparable views. Towards Antonio di Mavignola, beech and chesnut trees begin to appear. The descent becomes steeper and soon one sees the roofs of Pinzolo at the foot of the valley, that pretty village which is even more famous as an alpine centre than Madonna-di-Campiglio. One starts from there for most of the climbs in the Brenta, the Adamello and the Presanella.

Before entering the village we must stop for a moment at the little church of San Vigilio, one of the artistic treasures of the Trentino. The southern façade is entirely covered with frescoes, of which the finest is a *Danse Macabre* painted by Simone Baschenis in 1539 and in sufficient preservation to allow one to distinguish the 40 figures and their accompanying legends.

From Pinzolo to Caderzone the valley gradually broadens out, but the mountain scenery remains magnificent, especially to the right where the glaciers of the Adamello sparkle in the sun. The road runs down the Val Rendena beside the Sarca, gradually losing its Alpine character. At Tione it divides, one branch running down towards the

south and the Lake of Idro, the other following an easterly direction towards Ponte Arche through the narrow gorge of the Scaletta with its picturesque windings.

After passing the little watering-place of Comano we enter a new and even more striking gorge whose terrifying aspect led to its being called the Ravine of Death. One feels an almost physical relief when at a turn in the road one sees the end of the two great walls which hug the valley so tightly, and looks out over the undulating plateau of the Trentino.

Cima Tosa.

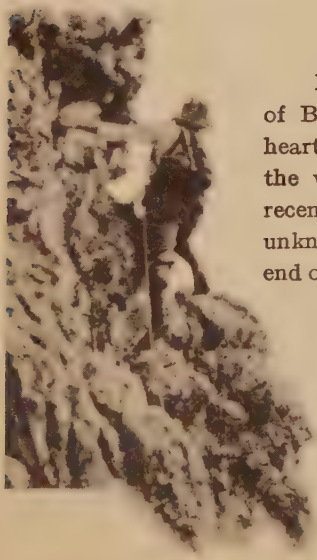
The Lake of Toblino appears as a delightful oasis graciously welcoming the traveller. Having just passed through such wild and romantic scenery it is difficult at first to appreciate the gentle melancholy of these still waters surrounded by dark woods. The Château Toblino, formerly the summer residence of Cardinal Clesio, that Prince and Bishop known as Leo X of the Trentino, is now transformed into a delightful and most picturesque Hotel full of beautiful furniture and works of art. No poet could find more romantic quarters. A bottle of Vino Santo, the famous

Cristallo.

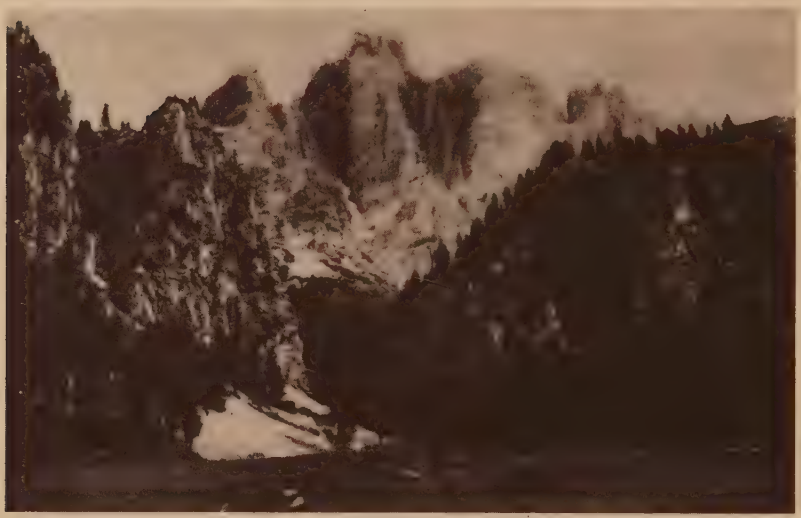
Rhetian wine Virgil did not hesitate to compare with Falerno, completed my enjoyment on the happy night I spent there. From a balcony high over the sleeping waters I saw night gently enfold the Lake.

* * *

Many other excursions in the neighbourhood of Bolzano allow one to penetrate into the very heart of the Dolomites, one of the finest regions in the whole Alpine chain and one which has so recently come into its own. It was for long almost unknown to travellers. It was not till towards the end of the XVIIIth century that its existence became known to the scientific world. The people of Dauphiny may well be proud that this revelation was largely due to one of their compatriots who had the honour of giving his name to the mountains. Dolo-



The ascent of Cristallo.

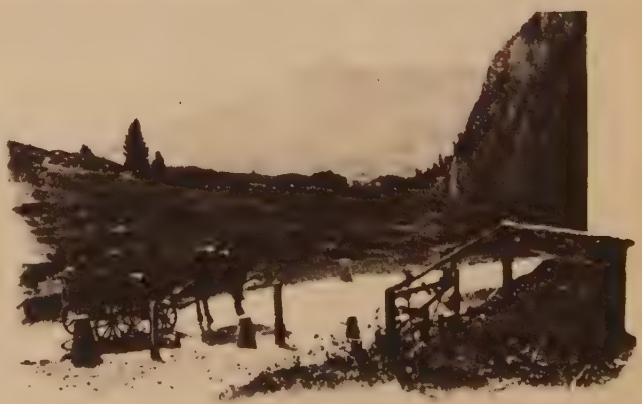


Cristallo.

mien, the geologist — the story of whose life is a veritable romance — was born in 1750 at Dolomien, a little commune in the Isère not far from Tour-du-Pin.

But the Dolomites did not become really open to the world till visitors began to penetrate into Tyrol in the middle of the XIXth century. The first ascent of the Rosengarten by Tucker dates only from 1874; that of the Marmolata was not effected till five years later by Paul Grohmann, one of the most famous pioneers of this region.

Today most of the ascents are made easier by the construction of numerous



Marmolata.

and well managed shelters. The Marmolata itself is easily accomplished from the Bamberger hut, provided one has a good guide and a steady head.

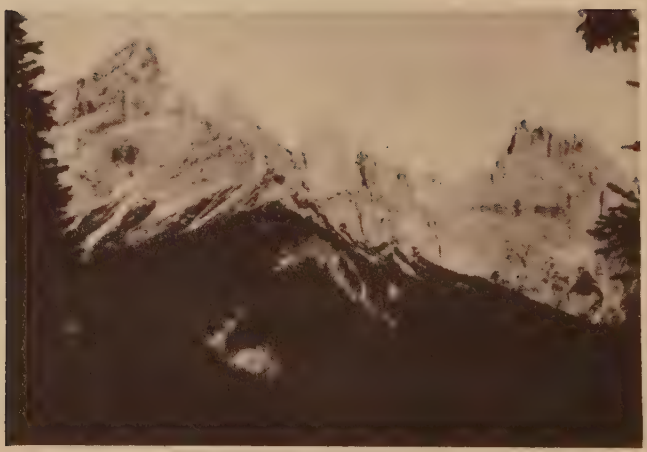
As for the experts who demand difficulty and adventure, more than enough is left to satisfy their craving ; many climbs offer every kind of difficulty and danger they could desire. Sasso Lungo, the southern face of the Marmolata, certain peaks of the Rosengarten, the Brenta, Cristallo and many others may still figure with honour on the list of their conquests.

Pala di San Martino.

With the exception of Jeanès, artists have not yet learned to draw inspiration from these wonderful mountains of changing colours, with their rocks of magnesium and limestone. There is no sight in the whole world, according to Albert Dauzat, who knows the mountains of Europe so intimately, to equal the spectacle seen every clear evening from Bolzano — when sunset gilds the peaks of the Rosengarten. In ordinary lights as sharp as the jagged teeth of a saw, " the magic of the setting sun transforms them into a veritable Rose Garden ".

How many other scenes in all this wonderful range of the Dolomites are as beautiful or even surpass in beauty this celebrated view. But how difficult it is, indeed, to choose among the myriad beauties which a beneficent God has sown with a lavish hand among this region of the Alps

which look downward over Italy. The mountains themselves seem, as if to protect the glories of Venice and the Venetian plain, to have adorned themselves in brilliant splendour. And yet had I really to choose and award the palm to one of these beauties I believe I should give it to the true Route des Dolomites, the road that connects Bolzano and Cortina d'Ampezzo, the incomparable Cortina that I am impatient to see again and towards which we start tomorrow.



Figlia della Rosetta.

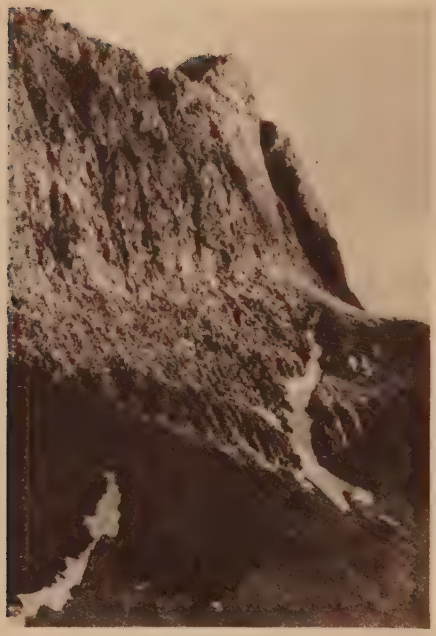
Rosengarten. The Summit.

III

The new Dolomites Road.

Everything fades into insignificance before the splendour of the new Dolomites Road, from Bolzano to Cortina d'Ampezzo. Every summer since it was opened to traffic fifteen years ago, thousands upon thousands of private cars have sped over it, not to mention the splendid daily service organised by the *Écrit* and used by countless travellers.

No other mountain road can be compared to it. It is true that its Passes only average 6560 feet in height and that other roads have more wonderful views of glaciers and of summits covered by eternal snows. From that point of view, the *Route des Alpes* is unique in Europe. But no other mountain road, over a stretch of 30 leagues can compare with the Dolomites road in grandeur, beauty and above all in variety. It never oppresses



On the slopes of the Rosengarten.

one by that overpowering feeling which before Mont Blanc, the Meije or the Jungfrau so quickly produces a sensation of being crushed — a sensation many people cannot support. And yet, with every winding, every bend, the peaks surge up before us, their fantastic rocky forms piercing the sky and outlined against it in clear sharp lines. One can well imagine oneself gazing on the battlements of some bombarded and dismantled citadel, its ruined towers rent by shells and bombs. The great red and yellow limestone cliffs make the most striking contrast with the dazzling white snow, the blue heavens, the green meadows and the dark pines. No other Alpine region gives the slightest idea of these curious heights. I know no other place, except perhaps in a small way, the almost unknown region of Archiane in the mountains of Diois, which suggest, in subdued tones, certain aspects of the crests of the Dolomites. Their peculiar

Winter in the Dolomites.

charm lies in the fact that they are high mountains with the added delight of colour. One would need to spend many months among them, to become familiar with the effects of light with which dawn, midday, dusk and moonlight are so prodigal among these peaks. One must live through one of those storms whose splendour defies imagination. The peals of thunder are almost continuous among these iron rocks which attract the electricity; the innumerable precipices below resemble steeples surmounted by lightning-conductors. Sometimes great circular clouds full of moisture, are blown by the south winds against these rock walls where they discharge their contents with uninterrupted flashes, like huge Japanese lanterns lit up by the light inside them. The sunsets have an extraordinary brillance seen, nowhere else, and of which neither pen nor brush can give any conception, — except perhaps the watercolours of Jeanès, who lived in the Dolomites for many years and seems to have captured an impression of the incandescence of the peaks — sometimes called the *alpenglühen* — in all its

The Towers of Vajolet.

The Pyramids of Ritten.

Lake of Dobbiaco.

A Peasant of the Italian Tyrol.

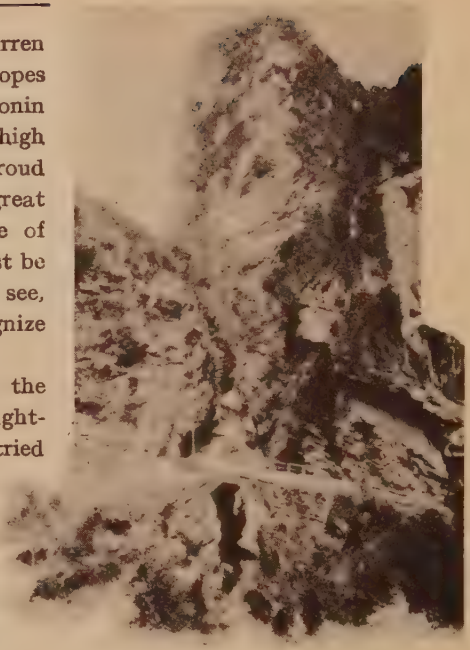
glory. It occasionally happens, owing to some unexplained phenomena, that an hour or two after sunset, the summits suddenly become luminous, of a deep red, like the glow of red hot steel and it is a most curious sight to see the mountains suddenly flame out in the darkness.

Before the opening of the new Dolomite road we are about to follow, travellers seldom came to Cortina — except of course the Italians going up to Cadore — except by Dobbiaco where the *Strada Allemagna*, a road built about 1830 begins. It, too, is a fine road, with many justly famous views. The Lake of Dobbiaco; the village of Landro with Cristallo towering majestically

Limestone Pyramids.

above it; the little Lake of Durren with the pinewoods and steep slopes of Cristallo mirrored in it; Carbonin beautifully situated over 4920 feet high between Monte Piano and the proud heights of Croda Rossa with its great red pinnacles rising from a base of grey limestone — these may almost be said to rival what we are about to see, and it would be unjust not to recognize their beauty.

The Dolomites road of which the Austrians, under pretext of thoughtfullness for tourists and alpinists, tried to dissimulate the strategic importance, is a marvel of bold conception and brillant engineering. And there is no part of the world, not even excepting Switzerland, where the needs of travellers are better understood and catered for, than in Tyrol.



The Johaneskofel.

The whole distance of 120 kilometers between Bolzano and Cortina can be covered by motor, in one day. The cars seem to hurl themselves on the mountains, to rush breathlessly up the endless loops and windings, to tear through forests, meadows and villages, to cross bridges with the same eager impetuosity — then to mark the great silence with their throbbing as they halt on the Passes, exhausted by effort but exultant in conquest. It seems almost as if their engines felt the intoxication of speed just as we

Church at Dobbiaco.

do; a communicative thrill seems to make us regulate the throbbing of our hearts with theirs.

When I first travalled in the Dolomites the road by the Karersee — now called Lago di Carezza, a name which better expresses the beauty of that charming little lake — was not yet open to motors. The Lake is now reached in a very short time, and after following the Brenner route

Winklerturn.

for some kilometers, the road crosses the Isarco and enters the wonderful porphyry gorges of the Val d'Ego (Eggenthal), one of the most splendid ravines in the world. It is a giddy journey, through tunnels pierced in the blood-red rock, across viaducts and bridges built out at a great

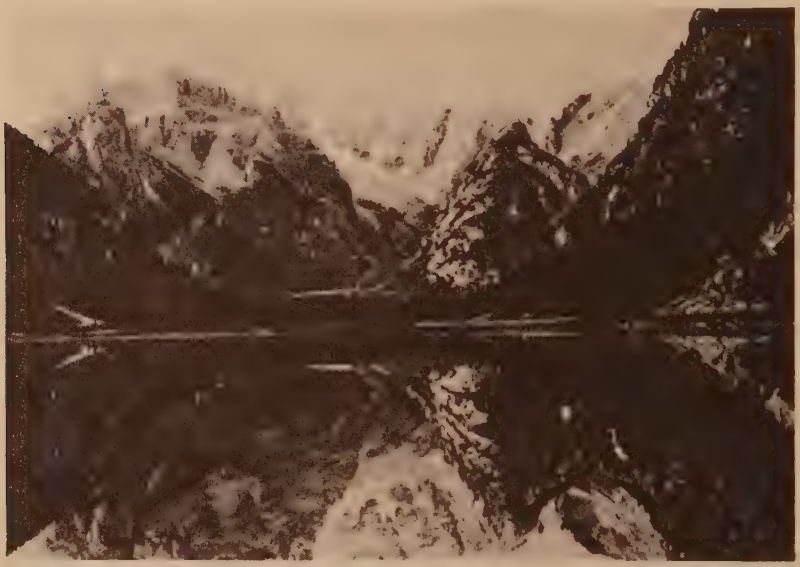
Dobbiaco.

height over the torrent. We must stop for a moment to see the wonderful and terrifying falls the river has made for itself in the course of centuries, over the red and now almost precipitous wall of rock. One heaves a sigh of relief on leaving this wild ravine. Emerging on to a green and smiling valley, the slender jagged peaks of the first Dolomites are seen in the far distance outlined against the blue sky above dark forests of larch and pine.

The Lake of Durren.

The village of Ponte Nova lies picturesquely between the Rosengarten and the Latemar of which the graceful Chamois peak is specially striking. Nova Levante or Nova Italiana (the Austrian Welschnofen) has an equally fine situation, the steeple of its Church seen against the sky to the side of

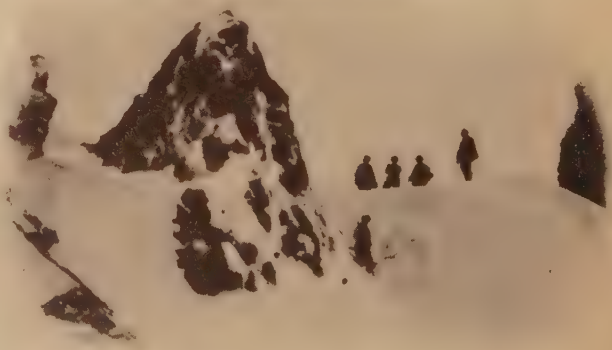
Porphyry Rocks in the Val d'Ega.



The Lake of Durren and Cristallo.

the Rosengarten. After passing through the great Latemar forest, one is surprised all of a sudden to catch sight of the little Lake of Carezza through the firtrees. Its waters reflect the green trees, the blue sky, the yellow and red rocks of Latemar and seem iridescent with all the colours of the rainbow. There are few more romantic spots. One would like to stay there, to loiter and dream by these shores.

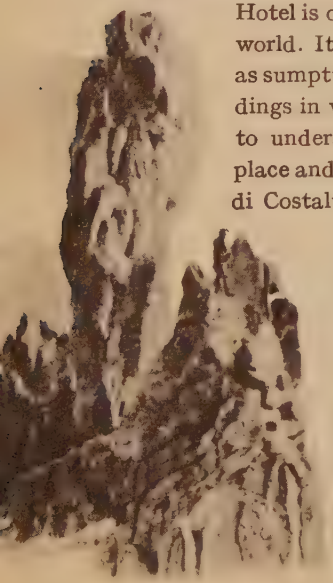
But already the car has carried us on. It soon stops



The Summit of Cristallo.

Chapel near Nova Italiana and Latemar.

at a big hotel where more prosaic if welcome joys await us. The Karersee Hotel is one of the best in Italy, one of the best in the world. It can accommodate 500 people, who can dine there as sumptuously as at the best Paris restaurant. The surroundings in which it stands are truly unequalled and it is easy to understand why one so often sees reproductions of this place and of its Lake. The road rises from here to Valico di Costalunga and the Karer Pass, between the Latemar and the Rosengarten; then it descends rapidly through the Val Fassa. The striking peaks of the Sella group are now seen on the horizon and the Punta di Valaccia (8648) soars majestically into the clouds. After passing Vallonga we come to the pretty village of Vigo di Fassa where we join the road which used to be used by motors before the Karersee road was open to them.



A difficult passage.

The Col of Carezza.

That part of the journey, though possibly less striking, was also picturesque and interesting. On leaving the plain of the Adige at Ora, that road rises above the river by many audacious windings, giving a marvellous view of the heights of the Mendola as far as the distant valley of Meran. Then it runs up the Val di Fiemme in which many curious customs still prevail and which long enjoyed special privileges. At Cavalese, the most important of the eleven communes which form one general commune, one sees some gigantic limetrees near the church which stands on a great terrace looking down on the course of the Avisio. Beside the Church there is also a table of stone surrounded by roughly carved stone benches where the chief men of the district used to assemble to administer justice. This peasant Republic, which the Republic of Venice used to treat as a *sorella illustrissima*, has kept to its original statutes which date from the Middle Ages : it still holds immense forests in trust for its people. At Predazzo the road enters the Val di Fassa through rich pasturelands which seem in summer like an immense carpet

Lake of Carezza.

of flowers. At Vigo di Fassa the road, as we saw, joins the new Dolomites Road, and from there the motor rushes at full speed towards the high passes which will reveal to us the very heart of the Dolomites.

A Typical Costume.

We ascend the valley of the Avisio by a gentle slope passing the pretty villages of Pozza, Pera and Campitello. The gentle consonances of these names added to a certain gaiety expressed by the houses as well as by faces of the people, used, before the war, to reveal the approach of Italy. The frontier was in fact just at hand, a few hours took one to Feltre or Belluno. On leaving Canazel, with the sharp peaks of Sasso Lungo towering above it like giant fingers menacing the heavens, a succession of windings through conifers and pastures, carry us up the steep slope

of Pordoï, between the great rocks of the Sella and the bastions of the Marmolata, set like a monarch in the centre of a group which it dominates from its 11,020 feet. A little lake of intensely blue water lies so beautifully in a setting of pines and rocks that it looks as if made to complete the picture. At the Pass itself, a pyramid marks the height and the date of the opening of the new road. The slopes are strewn with marshy tracts. Snowballing in midsummer is such a rare sport that my companions and I could not resist it and took advantage of a brief halt while the car cooled down before commencing the descent towards Arabba in the green valley where the Corderole rises. That is an idyllic spot; in spring the meadows are covered with lilies, primroses, orchids and campions — immense fields of gaily coloured flowers. I remember seeing these meadows already burnt up at the end of August; the autumn crocus, the last flower of the year, turning its violet calix towards the pale sunlight. The women of this district wear green pleated, short-waisted dresses; their head-dress is an enormous black felt hat, which they take off in greeting and in Church, just like the men.

After Arabba the road is level for several kilometers, running along

Crodda Rossa.

Campitello.

the mountain side high above the Corderole which thunders far below in its narrow gorge. One sees traces of the war all over this district which lay in the frontier zone. The Italians have set themselves with extraordinary zeal and despatch to rebuilding and reconstruction. I greeted the glaringly new village of Pieve di Livinallongo in passing, perched like a nest on a rocky terrace. The site is so contracted that the authorities were again obliged to erect houses of 5 or 6 stories which had astonished me so much in former years. The only open space is the little square in front of the Church, the centre of the life of the village.

We pass through the village of Andraz, overlooked by the ruins of an old Castle formerly the summer residence of the Bishops of Bressanone, who exploited the iron ore of this region. The horizon is now blocked by the enormous mass of the Tofana, and the car leaps forward towards it with renewed energy. The rush up the Falzarego Pass, made at full speed, is one of the grandest and at the same time most agonizing experiences one can imagine. Nature is savage here. The windings of the road are laid with extraordinary daring across stony wastes. Near

The Route from Canazei to Campitello.

the summit the road pierces the rock in a short winding tunnel on emerging from which we see the curious Sasso di Stria (Sorcerer's Rock). The road is clasped between the yellow heights of Lagazuoi and the rocks of Nuvolao. Looking back one has a magnificent view of the glaciers and snowfields of the Marmolata. This whole region is full of reminders of the War. We see the hill of Castelletto whose summit was blown off by an Italian mine on the night of July 11, 1916.

From the Falzarego Pass, where there is a similar pyramid to that of Pordoï, there is one of the finest mountain views I know. One sees the outline of the curious Cinque Torri which look like the ruins of a walled town of feudal times. And towering above everything else, the great mass of the Tofana, rising from the pinetrees and the rocky wastes.

From the Col itself, a path runs up the Val Travernanzes as far as the Wolf-Glanwel Shelter. A little further on two paths branch off, one to the summit of Nuvolao, the other to the Reichenberg Refuge which lies in a delightful situation beside a little Lake whose still waters reflect the strangely jagged peaks of the Croda del Lago. The road now

In Sarentino.

descends, sometimes through woods, sometimes through clearings, as far as the green plateau of Pocol, extended by the rocky prominence of the Crepa, the road winding round it like a gigantic serpent.

This whole road from Bolzano to Cortina is a marvel of conception and execution, and the engineers who built it may well be proud. For they had to overcome the greatest technical difficulties and they succeeded so well that the average slope is not more than 7 %. Between Canazei and Pordoï, a distance of 12 kilometers, there is a difference of 2625 feet in height. And the difference is even more marked on the stretch we have still to cover, between Falzarego and Cortina. It was in this last stretch that there were most difficulties to overcome and in which the road had often to be carried through the rock in tunnels or over the abyss on high supporting walls. And yet the road was built in little more then 6 years, between 1904 and 1910. But the Austrians, who made this magnificent effort for strategic rather than for touristic reasons, never dreamt that ten years later their road would be the most cherished possession of Italian tourists.

Tofana.

The panorama of mountains which tower above the Val d'Ampezzo is of extraordinary grandeur — from the graceful snowy pyramid of the Antelao to the precipices of the Cadini and of Sorapis which used to mark the frontier, from the

The Col of Pordoï.

great rocks of Popena and Cristallo to the no less imposing mass of the Tofana, from Nuvolao to the formidable barrier of the Pomagagnon.

Suddenly a cry of delight bursts from our lips, for at a turn in the road, the whole Val d'Ampezzo is revealed to us. Surrounded by a marvellous mountain setting, lying in the midst of it in the golden light of the setting sun, we see the incomparable Cortina, the jewel of the Dolomites, set in the fresh green of its meadows, encircled by the rubies and topaz of its rocks.

* * *

Instead of running straight down into Cortina, if one has time and a good car at one's disposal, there is a magnificent run round the *massif* of the Pala, leaving the main road we have followed so far, either at Predazzo or at Pieve di Livinallongo, or even at Andraz between the Passes of Pordoï and Falzarego. One then descends on Caprile along the valley of the Cordevole. Caprile, which was a frontier village and suffered terribly in the war, is a charming and cheerful place, entirely Italian in character, though a column in its chief Square surmounted by the Lion of St. Mark, reminds us that Venetian domination formerly extended as

The Summit of Cinque Torri.

far as this. Leaving Caprile the road, which runs beside the river, is no longer specially interesting except near Alleghe where a landslide in the middle of the XVIIIth century blocked the course of the Cordevole and formed the little Lake by whose shores we run for nearly two kilometers.

The impression of being in Italy grows stronger and stronger. The white roads, the dusty trees, the fields of maize, the coloured façades, the smiling faces, the vines suspended with a festive air, from tree to tree in garlands — everything has the gentle, simple, happy atmosphere of Italy.

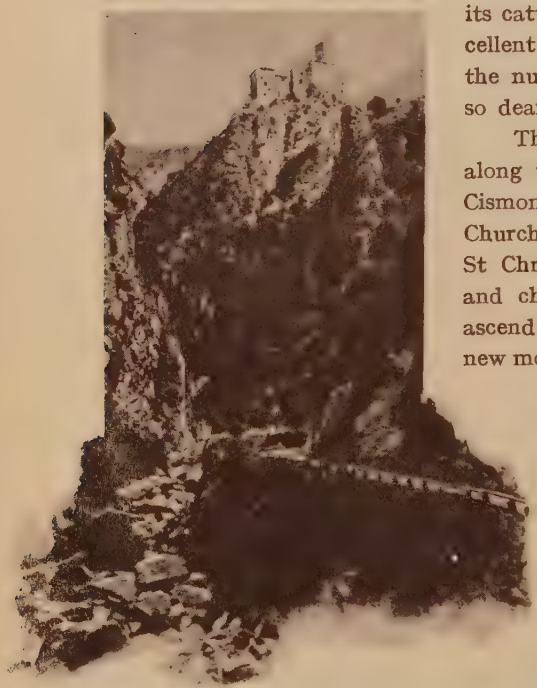
Costumes of Pieve di Livinallongo.

We pass through Cencenighe and almost at once arrive at Agordo, beautifully situated

Cinque Torri.

at the confluence of several valleys. Agordo is a pleasant little town of several thousand inhabitants and could easily be developed into a tourist centre.

From there a beautiful road, as yet little used by foreigners, leads to Fiera di Primiero, well known for its cattle and horse fairs. It is an excellent centre for sport, as well as for the numerous climbs in the Pala group so dear to alpinists.



The Castle of Karneid in the Eggen Valley.

The road now turns due north along the course of the foaming Cismone. From the façade of the Church at Siror, a gigantic figure of St Christopher seems to welcome us and cheer us on our way. Then we ascend through meadows fragrant with new mown hay which the natives are trying to make while the sun shines. Fruit and chesnut trees line the road but soon give place to pine-trees and a more alpine vegetation. The peaks seem to draw near, to rise up to more imposing heights with their giddy precipices and aiguilles piercing and unravelling the clouds. The magnificent Cimon della Pala (10,970) is lost in the blue sky. This is one of the finest view - points in the Dolomites and rivals the more famous views on the way from Bolzano to Cortina.

San Martino di Castrozza which was entirely destroyed during the war has now been rebuilt; for the moment it looks indeed too new; the white walls of its Hotels, and its tennis courts grate a little on the traveller, who comes to the Dolomites for mountain joys and prefers a rough path through fir trees to the most modern dances.

We continue to ascend through wild and ravaged country which the devastation wrought by the war has made like a scene from Dante's *Inferno*. We mount up and up by a wonderful and daring road, hung, as it were, over the void. At a height of 6415 feet we cross the Rolle Pass where many heroes met their death in the war. The view from here of the Cimon della Pala is extraordinarily striking and explains why this mountain is sometimes called the Matterhorn of Tyrol.

Croda del Lago

Leaving these visions of splendour behind us, the descent seems less interesting. We find all through the route the usual landscape of green meadows and fine forests which finally become a trifle monotonous unless they serve as a foreground for the finer decorative effect of a mountain scene, for distant glaciers, or the snow sparkling in the sun on a jagged summit of strange form and brilliant colouring which is one of the glories of the Dolomites. The green hills are somewhat wearying if unbroken by bare mountain rocks, whose colours so happily contrast with the meadows and the dark pine forests.

At the end of the winding road a route opens to the right. Extending along the foot of the charming Punta Valles, the road leads us to the little village of Falcade and from thence we proceed direct to Mœna.

The road to the left, which we take, leads to Predazzo the large village which we have lately passed and where we rejoin the great Route of the Dolomites.

From col of Falzarego.

Marmolata.

IV

Cortina and the Lake of Misurina.

It is surely one of the greatest joys of travelling to come to some place in which we feel we should like to settle down and spend the rest of our lives. It is not the most beautiful places that appeal to us in this way; mere beauty dazzles the eye without touching the heart. But there are modest places which attract us with a gentle insiduous charm and bind us to them as with invisible bonds. There are also a few places which combine these faculties; they are both beautiful and charming; they make their conquest so rapidly that the first glimpse of them is enough. Instinctively we open our arms and take them to our hearts.

In spite of all that I had heard about Cortina before I first saw it,

Tunnel in the Crepa Road.

now nearly twelve years ago, I had no idea of its beauty. And now, finding it happily almost untouched by the war, I come back to it with the same delight.

The little town is charming in itself; the constant stir of travellers, carriages, motors, the luxurious hotels and shops. The Church from whose graceful Campanile one has a wonderful view, contains carvings by Brustolon, the famous wood-carver who was born at Belluno, and whose work is to be found all over this region. Wood-carving has always been practised at Cortina, and though not so famous as that of Ortisei, its Industrial School is a flourishing one, and the marquetry

Cortina and Pomagagnon.

Cortina.

Tofana.

which comes from it, testifies, if not always to absolute good taste, at least to great technical ability. But the magnificent setting in which Cortina lies is unique; the mountains of curious but impressive form which surround it, their constantly changing colour, their fragile beauty in the pale light of dawn, their sublime grandeur when glowing with the purple and gold of sunset.

And Cortina is an even better centre than Bolzano; one can make countless splendid excursions from here and if one is a climber. the ascents of the Dolomites are extraordinarily interesting.

The traveller must explore the charming valleys of the tributaries of the Boite, and especially that of Travenanzes, the road to which branches off from the main road to Dobbiaco at the villiage of Fiammes. And it is from Cortina that one can most easily visit the Lake of Ghedina, a little sheet of water surrounded by woods lying at the foot of the eastern slope of the Tofana. Also the Lago or Laghetto di Federa which lies not far from the village of Campo where the natives point out a house in which they say, Titian was born. From the Reichenberg Refuge

Cortina.

which is quite near there, one can climb the two peaks which tower above the Lake, the Becco di Mezzodi, and the Croda da Lago, with its curious precipices, an exacting and difficult climb.

Of the peaks which surround the Val d'Ampezzo, Nuvolao (8445 ft) is one which can be climbed without great difficulty. One cannot say that of any of those which exceed 9800 feet, the Tofana, the Pelmo, or Antelao. The most dangerous of all, which claims its victims nearly every year, is Cristallo, especially if climbed by the dal Passo route where for nearly four hours the ascent has to be made by precipitous chimneys.

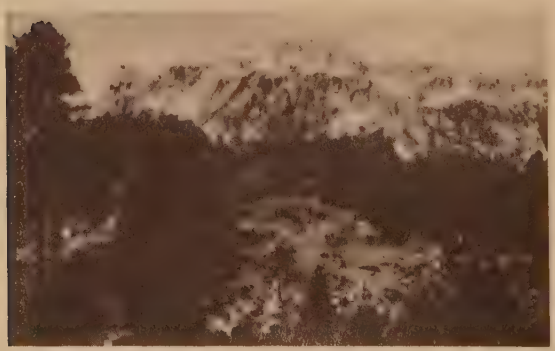
Less ambitious tourists like myself, may well be content to make a tour round the Tofana, setting out by the Carbonin road and passing Ponte Alpo, the Glanwel Refuge and the Col dei Bos, whence one descends steeply through fertile meadows to the Falzarego road.

But if one aspires only to enjoy the sunset on the mountains, to contemplate that spectacle in all its grandeur, one has only to go to the *Belvédère* on the Crepa. From that rocky eminence which juts out into the Ampezzo valley like the bow of a great ship, the whol valley lies spread before one like a map in relief. Cortina,

Costumes of the Val d'Ampezzo.

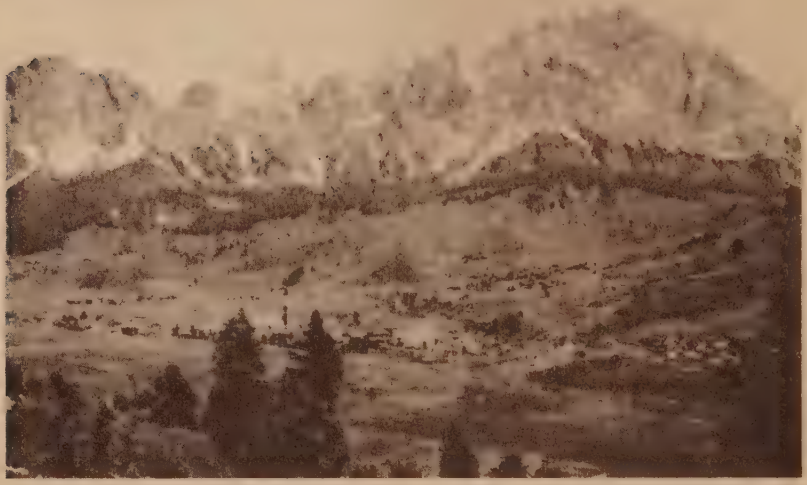
Cortina and Cristallo.

in its green hollow, in the fragrance of its flowery meadows is guarded by the mass of the Tofana, the chain of Pomagagnon, with Cristallo towering above it, Sorapis and the Cinque Torri. Above the pine and larch forests at the foot of the hills, the bare and jagged rocks rise into the limpid heavens more luminous and more brilliant, the further the shadows creep across the valley. The light clouds wafted towards them by 'southerly breezes, the *vento marino* as it is called here creep in between the *arêtes*, like locks of hair between the teeth of a tortoiseshell



Cortina and Tofana.

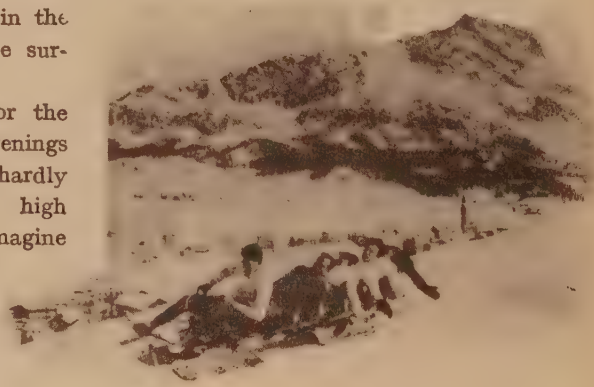
Pomagagnon.



Cortina from Ampezzo.

comb. Gradually the reds and yellows light up. The rocks seem on fire. This strange and unique impression haunts the memory. D'Annunzio, trying to describe the inner light which sometimes irradiates a face, "to the extent of transcending reality and gleaming against the very sky of destiny", found no more vivid comparison than the radiance of the Dolomites, "when their crests alone flame out in the dusk, clear against the surrounding darkness".

If it were not for the sudden coolness of the evenings after sunset, one would hardly think oneself in the high mountains, but might imagine



The Tre Cime di Lavaredo.

On the Top.

oneself on some plateau in the Apennines. The blue is as deep as the blue above the Tuscan valleys; when a cloud crosses the sky, it is so drenched with light that it seems airy and transparent as a soap-bubble. This

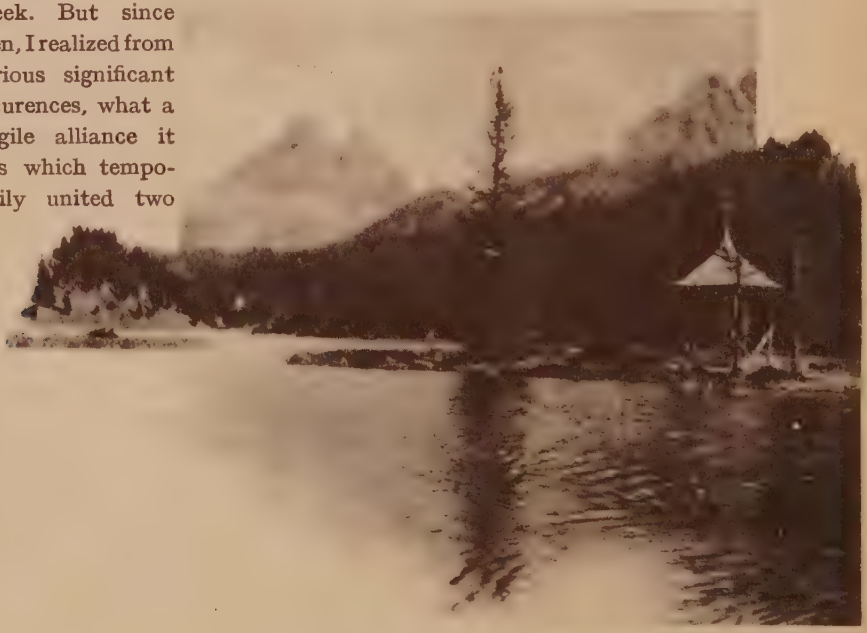
Cortina. The Place de la Poste in Winter.

whole region used to be and always had been Italian, both racially and geographically. The valleys of the Boite and its tributaries really constituted the canton of Cadore. While on the other side of the mountains which surround the Val d'Ampezzo, the names have a German gruffness

Cortina. The Old Tower.

(Schluderbach, Dyrrenstein, etc.), here the names of towns, rivers and mountains, even before the war when the region still belonged politically to Austria, sing out in the most musical language in the world, the only language in which nearly all the words end in a vowel. Race, costume, speech and grace of manner all reveal a common origin. But after having belonged to Venice, which gave it the title of *Magnifica Communita*, this region became Austrian in 1518, owing to the Treaty between the Venetian Republic and the Emperor Maximilian. In 1866, when Venice became Italian, the Val d'Ampezzo, detached from Cadore, remained under Austrian domination. This separation from Cortina was bitterly regretted by the people of Cadore. But feeling was perhaps not so strong as I imagined, because hatred of her southern rival was carefully cultivated by Austria. The people were perhaps not so keenly conscious of their

Italian origin as in other frontier districts, notably the Trentino where Austria failed to stifle hopes of reunion. I remember once asking a guide whether he loved Italy, whose language he spoke. He answered by putting his tongue in his cheek. But since then, I realized from various significant occurences, what a fragile alliance it was which temporarily united two



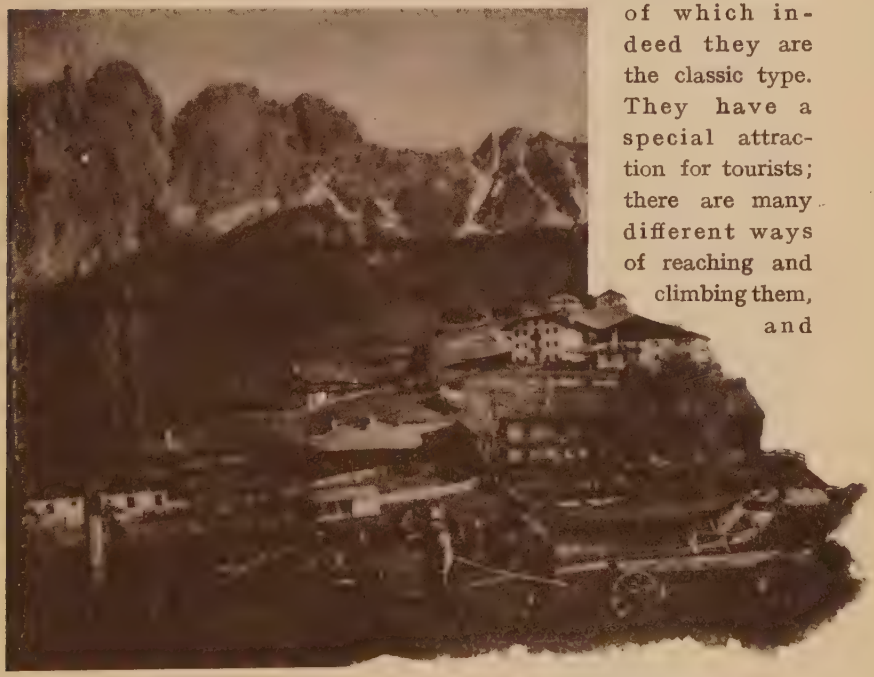
The Lake of Misurina.

enemy countries. To-day Cortina is completely Italian, and it was with one heart and mind that she erected the fine statue to General Cantore, the leader of the *Alpini*, in her station square.

* * *

One corner of the ancient territory of Austria always remained Italian, and that was Misurina whose name is as harmonius as the shores of its Lake. There is a good motor road to it now, but I chose to travel by the old road, one of the most beautiful in the world. It goes up by the Pian della Bigontina, through fresh green larches, across meadows gay with flowers. Here and there the air is fragrant with the scent of new mown hay, a scent as intoxicating as new wine. At the Col dei

Tre Croci, at the foot of the bare rocks of Cristallo, one has a view of the whole arena of the Ampezzo, a vast green hollow of forests, meadows and fields with scattered houses. Then the road runs down into a charming valley where great blue gentians grow among the grass and soon we come to the Lake gleaming peacefully in the sunshine. Few places are at once so impressive and so charming. Above the water, transparent as an emerald, the woods and meadows terraced up the hills form a dark belt, behind which the snowy peaks of some of the grandest of the Dolomites stand out. The Cadini, the buttresses of Cristallo, Sorapis with its soaring snowy slopes, and above them all the great rocky heights of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo, which look so strangely different from different points of view, but which from here seem cut like geometrical figures, gigantic pyramids, over 9840 feet in height. They are the best known of all the Dolomites of which indeed they are the classic type. They have a special attraction for tourists; there are many different ways of reaching and climbing them, and



Farms around Cortina.

many Refuges, especially that of Szygmondi, facilitate the ascent.

The Lake sleeps peacefully in the radiant glow of sunset. There is no ripple on its clear waters which reflect, in their vast depths, an unchanging picture of forests and mountains. Why had civilisation to intrude here, to tarnish this radiant mirror, to erect immense hotels on its shores, noisy in the season, sad and ghost-like when the first touch of frost extinguishes their life. Why desecrate the peaceful shores of this intensely poetic spot, why commit the sacrilege of erecting on the little island that ridiculous kiosk which recalls those built by the *nouveau riche* in their artificial ponds on the outskirts of our great cities.....

***

One can reach the Lake of Misurina by another and equally beautiful road used by those coming from the north who enter the Dolomites country by Dobbiaco.

From Carbonin this road runs in a south-easterly direction crossing

The Col of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo.

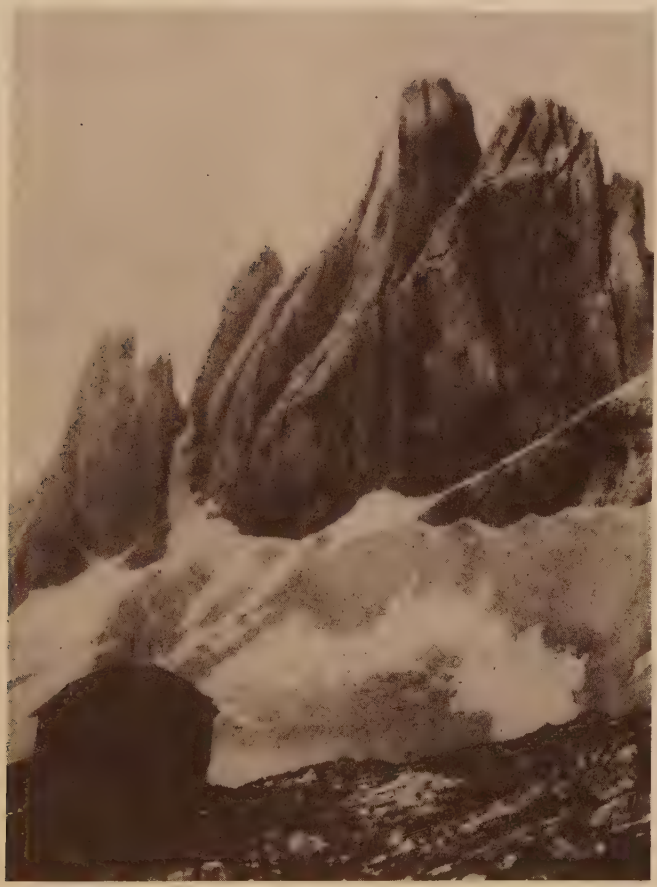
The Wolf-Glanwel Shelter at the foot of Tofana.

The Beak of Mezzodi.

a pretty little green plain covered with meadows and woods, then it runs up the Val Popena, beside a clear mountain torrent rushing down over a stony bed. The view of Monte Cristallo is extraordinarily impressive. The road becomes steeper and steeper and crosses the stream which used formerly for a short stretch to mark the frontier between Austria and Italy. To the right the luminous heights of Cristallo light up the sky, and facing it, outlined against the blue, the jagged peaks of the Cadini culminating in the Cima San Lucano (9319 ft). After crossing a little plateau and making another short ascent through pine woods, the road opens

Chalets at Cortina.

out on a magnificent view of the Croda Rossa. Then, after running through pastures and forests it crosses the Popena for the second time. Far away in the distance Sorapis gleams against the hori-



The Reichenberg Shelter.

zon and soon we come to the Col Sant' Angelo just above the Lake of Misurina.

From the little Inn, the oldest and least offensive of the buildings

View through the Pyramids of Cadini.

The Lake of Misurina.

which mar its shores, the view is absolutely unequalled; to the West Popena and Cristallino; facing us, to the South that immense range of heights, Antelao, Sorapis and the Tondi di Faloria; to the East the colossal rampart of the Cadini; behind us, towards the North, the Tre Cime di Lavaredo. Arriving suddenly by road at the shore of the Lake, the sight of these gigantic pyramids reflected in the still water is most striking.

Till the begining of the xxth century, the Lake of Misurina — one of the jewels of the Dolomites — was practically unknown to tourists.

Cristallo in Winter.

It was Paul Crohmann — whose name I have already mentioned and who is justly called the Christopher Columbus of the Dolomites by his compatriots — who was one of the first to recognize and praise its beauty. But the place first became well-known when after the assassination of King Humbert, the Queen-Mother of Italy came there in 1900 to soothe her grief in the great peace of these shores, up till then almost deserted.

Cortina, Soparis and Antelao.

Marmolata.

V

From Cortina to Pieve di Cadore.

Because we have witnessed the birth of the motor-car, — one might almost say of the train — we imagine ourselves to have invented travelling. Nothing could be further from the truth. The need of seeing new countries has been felt from the earliest times. Seneca, already afflicted by that love of change inherent in man, explained it by the presence of the divine spark, for, he said, " the nature of celestial things is to be always in motion ". From necessity or duty, neurasthenia or snobbery — and the words only are modern — for pleasure or instruction, the ancients travelled much. Socrates must have been the exception, he who never

Cristallo and the Dolomites Route.

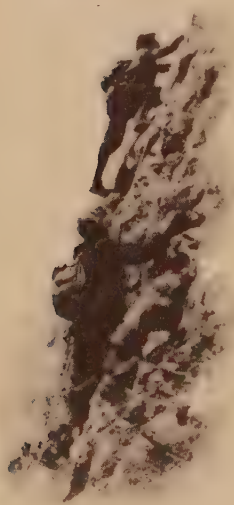
left Athens because, he declared, " desiring to educate himself, trees and fields had nothing to teach him ". In the Middle Ages and at the time of the Renaissance, the longing for unknown horizons grew and developed. The joy of travelling from town to town was never more keenly felt. In our day, even if we abandon the train for the motor-car, we do not really come in contact with the country. It is in a slow carriage, travelling only a few leagues a day, or better still on foot, staff in hand, that one really gets to know a country. The pure delight of travelling was tasted to the full by travellers of past centuries. Those were happy times of which Ruskin writes, when one could pass slowly along the great roads, across the meadows and under

A Costume of Ampezzo

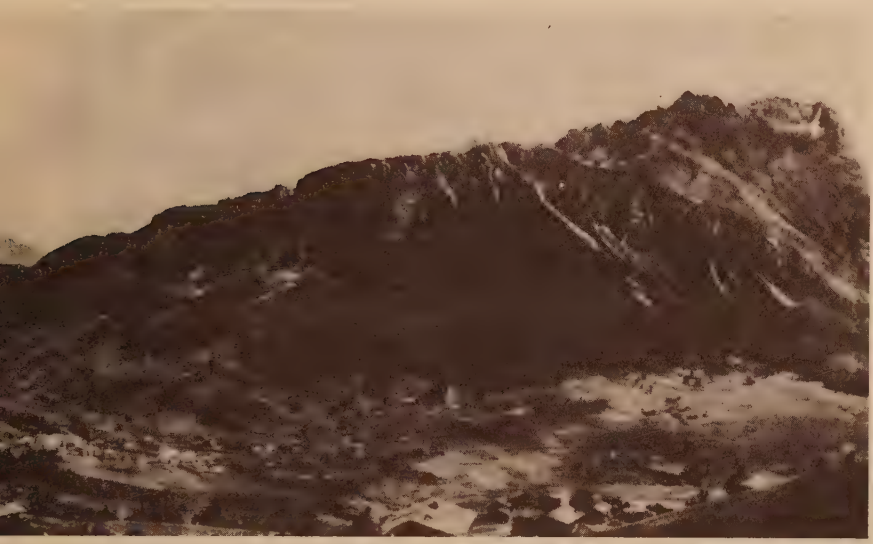
Saw-mills below Pomagagnon.

Panorama of Cortina from Ampezzo.

the trees, stopping if desired, to pick a flower. Then one saw the gradual change of country, of trees, of light, of sky, even of expression, unfolded before one as one passed along. One could give oneself up to the subtle influence of natural conditions, which, in distributing life in the valleys and on the heights, gave the country-side its character and in some sort its, soul.

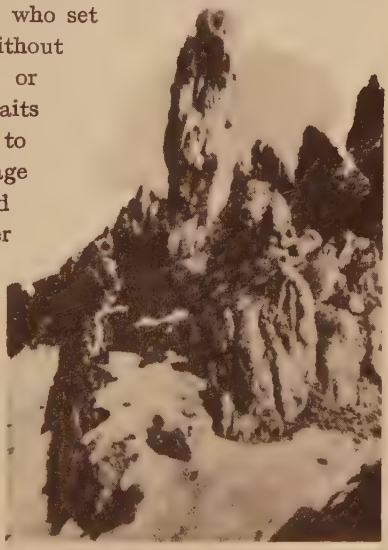


Easily-won pleasures are not the best; neither are comfortable journeys the most beautiful. It is impossible to appreciate the charm of a district without allowing time for transition. Preparation, initiation and a certain leisure for meditation are necessary. In former days, the distance, the difficulties, the lapse of time, surrounded one's destination with a certain delightful mystery. One made oneself every day more able to appreciate the impressions one had come so far to seek. I am



Panorama of Cortina from Ampezzo.

firmly convinced that Italy will never appear so attractive to us, as it did to those poor artists of bygone years, who set out in a rapture of expectation but without resources, stopping at Dijon, Lyon or Avignon to sell sketches or paint portraits and thus make the necessary money to continue their journey. Gradually, stage by stage, they drew nearer the Promised Land, their fervour so much the greater because of all the delays and trials they had endured to reach it...



Travel for once as they did ! Let us cover the 30 kilometers which lie between Cortina and Pieve, on foot. You will rarely have a better opportunity for the day promises to be cool and bright.

Sorapis in Winter.

From Misurina one can walk to Pieve di Cadore by Auronzo, following the val d'Ansiei through the great forests of the Marmarole, whose innumerable peaks stand out against the sky. From the Douane at San Marco, one can climb up to the Rifugio Tiziano, erected at a height of 7341 feet by the Italian Alpine Club, whence one sets out for the comparatively easy ascent of Monte Froppa, the highest summit of the Marmarole (9785 ft). After passing Auronzo, where the village seems dominated by the shining dome of the modern church of San Lucano, the Ansiei joins the Piave and the road crosses this confluence by a curious bridge in three divisions and soon brings us to Pieve di Cadore.

Cortina and the Dolomites of Cadore.

The direct road from Cortina to Pieve is shorter, being hardly more than 30 kilometers long, a beautiful, shady road, following the course of the Boite through varied and lovely country.

It fills one with the high spirits of youth to set out in the freshness

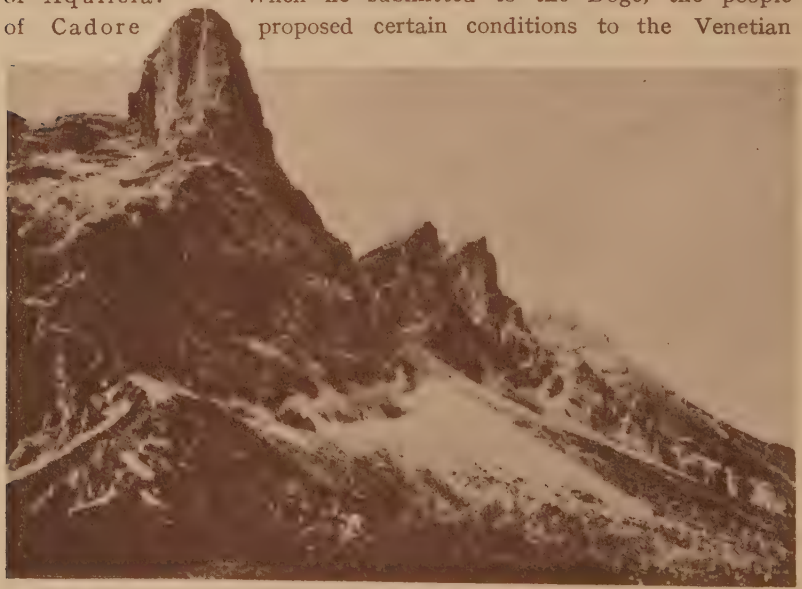
Cristallo.

of the morning, to walk over green, velvety pastures, through forests where larch and pine alternate. As we come gradually down to lower levels, the inhabitants seem to live on the road-side, happy to bask in the sunshine before again facing the rigours of the winter. We soon come into the region of fruit-trees where fields of clover and lucerne shine pink in the morning light. Soon we pass houses and villages, even though we are still on the heights, more than 3300 feet up. The contrast between the foot of this valley and the rugged mountains which tower above it, is amazing. The absolute delight of the whole experience takes possession of us. I remember how, a few months before his death, Courajod used to speak of this district with the greatest admiration; " You must go and enjoy that wonderful country " he would say " which Winckelman, stupid fellow, did not know how to appreciate. One of my chief grievances

against him and his followers is his misunderstanding of the beauty of Tyrol, that first promise of Italy".

From San Vito and Venas the road runs through rugged gorges, hemmed in between the flanks of Pelmo and Antelao, rich in heroic legends. This whole region of Cadore has always been filled with a pride of magnificent independence. Its unity of language, customs and sentiment made it like a little Alpine Republic. It was ruled at first by the Patriarch of Aquileia. When he submitted to the Doge, the people of Cadore proposed certain conditions to the Venetian

Antelao in Winter.



Mont Pelmo.

Antelao from Vallesina.

Republic, which were all accepted. They then submitted themselves to Venice with the cry, *Eamus ad bonos Venetos*! For four centuries they lived, governed by their own laws, under the protection of the lion of St. Mark. The lion had never more valiant defenders, as the famous battle

San Vito and Mont Pelmo.

of Cadore testified, when Venetian soldiers, guided by the citizens of Pieve and supported by the peasants surprised the troopers of Maximilian and cut them to pieces. Titian's picture of that battle, painted for the Doges' Palacè, was destroyed by the fire of 1577. Later, in the middle of last

Antelao from San Vito.

century, during the wars of independence, the villages of Cadore, the veritable sentinels of their country, fought with the same ardour. Representatives of all the various communes assembled in the *Palazzo Communale* and declared, like their ancestors, their fidelity to Venice *Votiomŏci a San Marco*! Such is the heroic and glorious past Carducci sings in the splendid lines he composed on the shores of Misurina, a veritable Battle-hymn, eloquent of hatred against the nothern oppressor.

Nate su l'ossa nostre, ferite, figluoli,
ferite
sopra l'eterno barbaro;
da'nevai, che di sangue tingemmo,
crosciate, macigni,
valanghe, stritolatelo!

But to-day on this fresh and lovely morning, the fragant breeze inclines one to happy memories rather than to battles. The joy of being alive in this bright sunshine, stifles every other sentiment. After lunching

Antelao.

in a pleasant little Albergo at Barca, we push on, but the sun is stronger nowand the last stage therefore more arduous. The road is lined with houses like the long street of a village. Peasants pass us on their way to the fountain with their bright copper pitchers, hung on to the end of a long bow skilfully balanced on their shoulders. At Tai we begin to see the houses of Pieve perched up on a height, we leave the main road which runs on to Belluno, and after a short climb enter the village of Titian.

Valle di Cadore; Antelao in the background.

Valle di Cadore.

VI

The Land of Titian.

Why is Pieve di Cadore, that attractive and picturesque little place, so seldom visited by tourists? Hardly mentioned by Baedeker, most travellers avoid it and go from Tai direct to Venice, whose charm already fascinates them. The Albergo is certainly modest, and artistic treasures practically non-existent, but few Italian villages can boast such a lovely situation. The town is built on a little group of hills with green summits, and is full of gardens, lawns and trees. There is not a single road which does not go steeply up and down, with many turns and twists. Even the little square is crookedly set down, on a slope. But a level site was found for the statue of Titian; it stands in front of the old *Palazzo Pubblico*, which is also set askew in relation to the other buildings which surround

the Piazza. They have fortunately retained their simple and original façades. Modernism has touched nothing at Pieve. There are still a few places to be found in Italy which have not changed since the xvth century and whose inhabitants, as Paul Bourget said, " seem to realize that to endure is the way to be up to date ".

A little below the Piazza, on the Piazetta dell'Arsenale we come to the house where the greatest and most famous of the Venetian painters was born. No surroundings could have been better chosen to train and ravish the eye of him who was to become the first of landscape painters, the acknowledged and incontestable master of colour. Built on one of the pyramid-shaped hills, which stand, surrounded by high mountains, at the top of the valley, Pieve offers an extraordinary variety of outlook. The play of light and shadow on the hills changes with every moment; the eye is imperceptibly trained to catch every fugitive aspect. In the torrid July days, when the miasma of fever and the smell of sulphur rise from the canals of Venice, how Titian must have longed for these mountains and forests, those green meadows so refreshing to wearied eyes!

Tai di Cadore.

Like Milton's prisoner, who, escaping one summer's morning, saw in the country a thousand ravishing sights he had never noticed before, so Titian experienced an almost childish delight to find himself again with Nature. Leaving his house, he would climb the little hill crowned by the ancient citadel and guardian of Cadore, which overlooked Pieve. From the roads round the city, one looks up into surrounding valleys, which are gradually lost to sight among the green hills. The most impressive is the valley of the Piave whose silvery streak the eye can follow into the far distance. Villages lie like grains of coral along the white ribbons of roads leading to Auronzo, Belluno and Cortina. All the slopes are clothed with woods and meadows. The country is not divided up into fields, but seems rather one vast park, kept intact just as Nature fashioned it. The great mountains soar up behind the foot-hills. And towards the North, dwarfing everything else are the towering peaks of the Marmarole,

le Marmarole care al Vecellio

as Carducci called them, the gigantic barrier over 9842 feet in height which protects Pieve from the cold winds.

Titian could see these mountains from his windows. Above the roofs of the little town and the wooded tops of the hills, their clear-cut arêtes

The Marmarole: Winter aspect of the Col of Tre Croci.

Aurozon.

stand out sharply against an intensely luminous sky. He saw them clothe themselves at dawn in pale milky tones and flame out at dusk like tongues of fire. But it was not only the sharp peaks which caught and haunted his imagination. All the landscape of Cadore lives again in his paintings; the precipices with sparse fir-trees clinging to them, the meadows, the dark woods, the villages perched on the heights above the Piave, and that splendid muscular type, the woodcutter of the mountains. The peasants one meets in the streets have not changed since he painted the type, their movements are for eternity, following an enduring rythm. They have still the massive head and thick beard of Titian's Apostles. A village worthy whom I heard arguing with a local farmer in the Albergo, had the noble features, the high forehead, tanned skin and keen expression found in Titian's portraits in Florence and Berlin. How truly Titian belongs to this hardy race, which, from Venice to Augsburg, unites the energy of the North, where keen air, hard work and frugal living assure

The Marmarole as seen from the Chalets of Federa Vecchia.

robust health, to the gentle grace of the South. He is a true son of Cadore and his compatriots may well keep his memory green. After affixing a tablet to the humble house in which he lived — "to him who through his art prepared the independence of his country" — they erected a dignified monument to his memory, one of the best modern statues I know with the simple inscription *"A Titien, le Cadore"*.

The region is not rich in works of the master; there is nothing that can rightly be attributed to him at Pieve except the *Holy Family* in the Church. Local tradition recognizes several members of his family in this work; the Madonna was painted we are told, from Lavinia with whose face and figure we are

A Water Carrier of Cadore.

Mont Marcora from San Vito.

familiar in other pictures; St. Joseph was the artist's father; the Bishop his son Pomponius; the clerk, Titian himself. There is no doubt as to this last point, the clerk is certainly the artist, just as he appears in the portrait at Madrid. Crowe and Cavalcaselle attribute this picture to Titian's son, Orazio. They may be right, for it is on the whole a mediocre work. But why spoil the tradition? And after all, what does it matter? One does not go to Pieve to see Titian's pictures but to see his country, the country on which his eyes opened to the beauty of the world, where the soul of the artist was awakened. It was in these fields and woods that he grew up, and for those who can understand them, they are the best school for teaching lessons of truth and simplicity. Nature has always taught a love of sincerity, a hatred of artificiality and mannerism. Titian was one of

Panorama of the Marmarole Chain.

Pieve di Cadore.

Panorama of the Marmarole Chain.

the first to love Nature and he painted her with all his peasant ardour and all his faith.

No one before him had so closely studied the mountains in all their varied aspects. That does not mean that he was a painter of mountains or that he painted them for themselves. But no artist of his time loved them as he did or painted more beautiful scenes from them. In some of the pictures of the Quattrocento one sees, of course, heights on the horizon, and in the paintings of the Florentine masters one recognizes the outline of the Tuscan Hills. The Venetians, who introduced landscape into nearly all their works, drew their inspiration from the scenes most familiar to them and painted the hills which surrounded the plain of Treviso or the distant mountains of the Friuli. In the works of Leonardo da Vinci, whose vivid memory of the Dolomites never left him, one can

Pieve di Cadore.

make out their jagged outline in the background of many of his pictures. But with all those artists, the mountains were only used as a decorative line.

In this connection it is curious to note how comparatively late in time, artists and writers developed this love of mountains. For long the

Battle of Cadore (Detail) by Titian (Florence. The Uffizi Gallery).

heights of the Alps and the Apennines awoke no sentiment but that of boredom. To the Latins a fertile country was the best country. Lucretius knew nothing that could compare with the delight of lying near a brook of running water, under the shadow of some great tree. Virgil liked nothing better than " cultivated fields and the rivers which flow through the valleys ". No one thought of crossing the Alps — if they had to do so —

Pieve under Snow.

without first making a vow to Jupiter *pro itu et reditu* and Claudius was so terrified of the glaciers that he compared them to the Gorgons. Heights seemed to the ancients the dreaded lair of storms and floods; legend made them also the homes of malevolent deities. I know of only two exceptions, the Emperor Hadrian — one of the most fervent admirers of Nature as he proved in the erection of his Villa near Tivoli — who climbed Monte Casio to see the sunrise; and

The Valley of the Boite towards Tai di Cadore.

Portrait of Titian by himself (Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin).

Lucilius the Younger, that poet of the 1st century who wrote a poem on Mount Etna. He was, I think, the only Latin writer astounded by the indifference of his contemporaries to the beauty of Nature; he could not understand why they would take trouble to go and see pictures or statues, but would not stir to contemplate the works of Nature, " a far greater artist than man ".

But an almost superstitious dread of mountains persisted to the Middle Ages; I have already mentioned the curious passage in which Petrarch told Cardinal Giovanni Colonna the story of his ascent of Ventoux (1). Till the time of Jean Jacques Rousseau in the XVIIIth century, the beauty of the Alpine regions was never even thought of, and the whole *massif* of Mont Blanc was vaguely alluded to as *the Glacier*. No artist or writer with true feeling or passionate love of mountains appeared till the time of Calame and Ruskin. It is of course true that painting is not a medium in which the spirit of the mountains can be caught; it can hardly express their vagueness, their infinity; too many exact details catch

(1) Land of St. Francis. (Picture Guides)

Altarpiece by Brustolon in Cadore Church.

The Square in Pieve di Cadore.

Pieve with the View to the North-West.

the eye and limit both vision and dream. Moreover the colours of the mountains are often too crude, too uniform. But we must except the Dolomites, so varied in form, so luminous, so diversely coloured with each changing hour of day; sometimes so transparent. Following their clear and often vertical lines, vision and thought mount instinctively towards the heavens.

Among the Venetian painters, who were almost all natives of the mainland near Venice, many hailed from the fore-Alpine region. Titian came from farthest north. He was born on the confines of Tyrol in a high and mountainous country. An English writer claims that in exploring the Cadore, he has identified all the mountains to be found in Titian's pictures. That is surely an exaggeration, but one does find in his drawings and pictures, if not exact reproductions, at least suggestions and adaptations of the native scenery he loved. Not long ago, while admiring the

Pieve looking to the North-East.

landscape in the portrait of *Dona Isabel de Portugal* at the Prado, I recognised the panorama seen from Pieve with its green hill and its background of jagged peaks. In the *Presentation of the Virgin* in the *Accademia* at Venice, the mountain seen above the group of assistants, intimately recalls part of the chain of the Marmarole which Titian saw from the windows of his house. Of no other painter of that period have we so many studies made on the spot. Titian loved the mountains, the cleanness and nobility which their outlines gave to a composition, their boldness, the rich colours of their rocks. Whenever his subject demanded or permitted, he used the familiar scenes of his native place and introduced them into his work, notably in the famous *St. Peter Martyr*, which I only know from the copy by Cigoli, which now replaces it in the Church of *SS. Giovanni e Paolo*, the original having been destroyed by the fire of

The Massif of Marmarole.

1867. Vasari considered it Titian's masterpiece and the Republic of Venice forbade the sale of that picture on pain of death. Constable, the great English landscape painter, also professed the most enthusiastic admiration for it. Titian never succeeded with greater genius in making Nature, if one can so express it, *take part* in the scene. Only some one bred in the mountains like himself, accustomed to climbing the steep

Women of Cadore.

paths up the wooded slopes, could have conceived the idea of painting this scene on sloping ground and of making the slope serve him to range his figures and his trees directly against the horizon. He made use of this same device in other pictures, notably in his *St. Jerome* in the *Brera*,

Ruins of the Castle of Pieve.

where again we find sloping ground, with great oak trees crossing the canvas obliquely and standing out boldly against the sky. All who have seen *St. Peter Martyr*, are struck by the intense emotion expressed by this rustic setting, the branches lighted up by the miraculous apparition of two angels bringing the martyr his palm, the trembling leaves which seem to shudder at the deed accomplished in their shadow, the sweeping movement of great clouds lit up by the reddish glow of sunset. Once again Nature had been the best, the inborn inspiration.

How well one understands the soul and work of that great son of Cadore on this lovely summer's afternoon in Pieve. The air is full of

The Titian Monument.

the wholesome scents of the countryside, the meadows are brightened by red clover, blue sage, yellow buttercups and colchicums. Titian had the stout heart of a true mountaineer; when nearly a centenarian he painted still with a firm touch. It is here, rather than in the cold and formal galleries of a Museum, rather even than in Venice herself where his glory will never be eclipsed, that I like to think of him. For it was here that he experienced the purest joys, among these scenes which his young eyes drank in so greedily, on this soil to which all the roots of his being were attached. In this little town, the great painter of the *Repubblica Serenissima*, the friend of Princes, he to whom Doges, Kings, Popes and Emperors were proud to sit, — here he was only the son of Gregorio Vecellio. There can be no greater happiness for those who have arrived at the pinnacle of fame, than to come back each year to the humble village where they were born. Far removed from artificiality, they

Glacier of Mont Froppa.

come gladly back to Nature, to a place where they have no role to play, where all men are equal. It was to Pieve that Titian fled, when troubles assailed him, to refresh his weary soul; Pieve which gave him fresh courage to struggle on, like those forest trees to which Dante, in a wonderful allegory, compares the unconquerable strivings of the soul, trees which stand up again, proudly erect in their own strength, after the tempest is past. —

> Come la fronda, che fletta la cima
> nel transito del vento, e poi si leva
> per la propria virtù che sublima...

In spite of all the honours and splendours of Venice, it was here in his humble little house that he was happiest; like Ariosto at Ferrara he might have carved on his lintel, *Parva, sed apta mihi...*

How good life is, how beautiful Nature! One has only to know how to enjoy it without excess, in the perfect balance and adjustment of every faculty. The true son of the mountain has a clear vision and outlook; he is a realist with that longing for the ideal which the constant sight of peaks ever striving heavenwards must inevitably give him. One does not expect from Titian either the profound thought of a Leonardo, or the grand and moving scenes of a Rembrandt or a Michael Angelo.

Titian : The Presentation of the Virgin (Detail).

Self Portrait of Titian (The Prado, Madrid).

The Valley of Pieve and the Marmarole.

One does not look for those lyrical effusions which, as in Correggio, appeal to our hearts and move us by their pure emotion. Titian dominates his subjects and submits them to his art with a calm but powerful intelligence, a will-power, a mastery of self which allows him to excel in every kind of subject. His whole appearance, face, figure and general make-up, was more that of a man of action than that of an artist. He was no dreamer. We have known him as careful of his own interests as any peasant. It is certainly true that a temperament ruled by reason never gives us the intense emotions the poets arouse in us; it does not carry us eagerly away to realms of mystery and infinitude. But such a temperament delights without disturbing us. It uses art to shew us the beauty of the world, the joy of living. Born and brought up in happiness, it radiates happiness, teaches happiness. Could there be a nobler calling?

Pieve : The Citadel.

— But already the sun has disappeared. The peaks alone are still lit up. The Marmarole begin to glow. Imperceptibly they pass from delicate rosy pink to glowing, flaming red; tinged with purple they appear almost incandescent. It is dusk, that enchanted hour which d'Annunzio justly calls " the hour of Titian ", because " all things become resplendent as with rich ambered gold like the nude figures of that marvellous painter. They seem to light up the heavens, rather than to receive light from them ". It was here that Titian feasted his eyes on these pale reflections which hover over their subject like the tresses of Flora over her lovely form. And when night fell, when the last glow behind the peaks of the Marmarole died away, he went quietly back to the old house of his fathers and there slept the untroubled sleep of an industrious peasant.

One of his most wonderful portraits — the one which appeals to

me most of all — is that at the Prado, where, towards the end of his life, he painted himself in profile — his sunken cheeks, his noble forehead, his prominent nose, his long white beard. What energy is expressed in

Saint Jerome by Titian (Brera Gallery, Milan).

that face and in that hand which holds the brush, ready to lay on those sure and powerful strokes so characteristic of his later work. As M. Hamel, one of his biographers has said, one is conscious — in this picture — of the indomitable will which persisted in this splendid old man, a will which neither sorrow nor hard work could wear out. " He sees, he seems to follow into space, some vision of ideal beauty; he is still eager to

express the beauty of the world, which he has already so often pointed out to his fellows. By his keen fresh spirit, by that comprehensive love of beauty which was constantly discovering new beauties, Titian explains and interprets to us the forces which govern our lives and mould the face of the universe; he communicates to his work the eternal youth of Nature ". At an age when others stop work and congeal into a hard mould of illusory perfection, he burst forth again and again, breaking the mould he had created. Up till his death he worked with the tenacity of the peasant, who, to the extreme limit of old age, is eager to acquire and wishes only to increase his property. Titian remained at heart a true son of the Cadore. Nearly all his life — with the exception of journeys he had to make at the request of Princes or Popes or Charles V —, was passed in that narrow belt of country which lies between the lagoons and the summit of Antelao.

Titian had not the curiosity of mind of a Leonardo da Vinci whose mind was open to everything in art as well as in science and litterature.

Panorama from the Castle of Pieve.

Practically nothing interested him outside his profession of painter and his own country satisfied all his love of nature. Few painters of such talent and reputation have travelled so little. The mountains, plains and lagoons of Venetia sufficed him and he found in them all the suggestions of design and colour that he wanted for he completion of his pictures. Above all the mountains inspired him.

Once again before we leave them, let us pay our homage to the Dolomites and the region of Cadore, which revealed the beauty of Nature to one of the greatest artists of all time.

The Square in Pieve.

Val Brenta.

VII

The Descent on Venetia.

From Pieve we return to Tai and take the road to Belluno. It is the ancient *Via di Lamagna* as the Italians say according to the peculiar phonetic dialect known as the *Cavallera* in this district. One can now make this whole journey by train, from Cortina to Pieve as well as from Pieve to Belluno. When I first visited the Dolomites, the diligences only served the villages in the valley. But for some years now, motors have dashed along these roads at full speed, with thundering noise and clouds of dust, which obscure the sun and trouble the peace of the old forests of Cadore.

This year I had the good fortune to come upon one of the light old country carts used by the peasants of this region and so I made the journey very peacefully in bright sunshine, lulled by the murmur of the foaming

Piave, which seems to have forgotten these terrible war years when it had the honour of being the line of communication.

On leaving Tai we are still in an alpine setting and the road winds through fir forests. A steep descent in three daringly engineered loops brings us to Perarolo lying, at the confluence of the Boite, in a most charming situation. The trees grow right down to the banks of the river, hardly leaving room for the houses. The Piave, now enlarged by its tributary and almost worthy of being called a river, is used from here for the transport of the famous wood of Cadore, unrivalled for ship-building and famous from the earliest times. Trunks of fir and

The Square in front of Titian's House.

larch used to be sent singly to Venice by this waterway, and I remember various ingenious contrivances by which each of the numerous proprietors and mill-owners utilised the current. But confronted with numerous complications and delays, I well understood the impatience of the natives for the completion of the railway which had been promised them so long.

In some places the valley is so shut in between the heights, that there is only room for the river and the road, which is in many places hewn out of the rock. After passing the village of Termine, which marks the southern limit of Cadore, the valley widens out. Cultivation extends its bounds. The trees seem to stretch out their branches under a warmer

The Church of Pieve.

sun. We pass groups of young women on the road, their faces obscured by veils, who walk with the radiant grace of the Venetian Madonnas. Many of the people we meet seem to have stepped out of Titian's pictures. In a corner of the market at Ospitale, an old woman sitting beside her basket, resembled, with her hooked nose and prominent chin, the eggseller in the foreground of the *Presentation*, and, as if to complete the comparison, a girl beside her in a blue dress and with luxuriant tresses, had the exact profile of the young Virgin ascending the steps of the Temple.

Towards Longarone, a prosperous and growing town, the mountains seem lower and further off; the *Gallina* alone dominates the plain with its pointed beak. Its aspect changes curiously as one approaches it. Then, at Ponte nell' Alpi, the road divides. The ancient *Via Allamagna* continues to the left. After running through the *Bosco del Gran Consiglio* whose centenarian trees were reserved for the fleets of the Republic, after passing two great lakes, that of S. Croce with its smiling aspect, and that of the Lago Morto with its still waters of deepest blue, this road runs

House in which Titian was born.

direct to Venice by Vittorio and Treviso. The road to the right is much less interesting. It keeps to its interminable straight line through country that is wearisome in the sameness of its cultivation; the sun beats straight down on it which makes the shady coolness of Belluno all the more welcome.

Though proud of its Roman past, Belluno has no Roman remains except a tomb found in the foundations of the Church of San Stefano. And it has equally few traces of the Middle Ages. It was the domination of Venice which gave it its present character. The lion of St. Mark has set his stamp on everything. For nearly four centuries Belluno was the faithful serf of Venice.

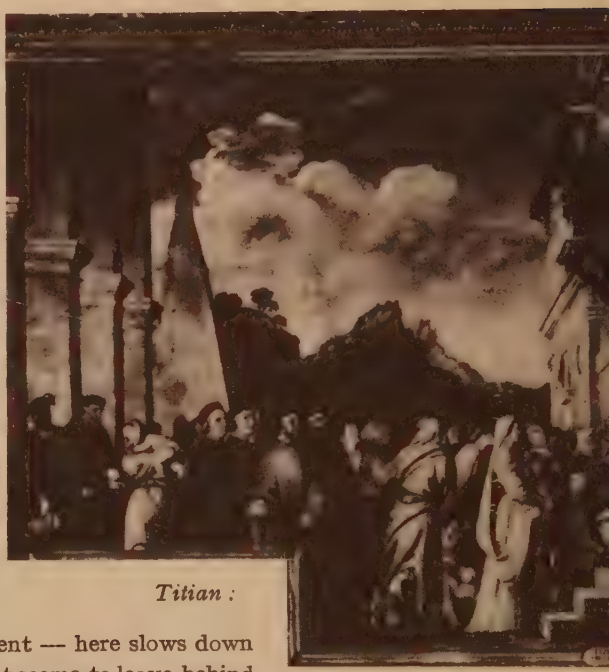
There is not much to say about the town itself. It is the capital of a province without having much life, a city of soldiers and officials. It

The Valley of the Piave.

owes the greater part of its activity to its situation at the exit from Tyrol. One feels that it is only a stopping place for tourists. The streets are picturesque; the arcaded houses with painted façades and the windows with carved pillars remind us of certain parts of Venice. There are two

The Château of Toblino.

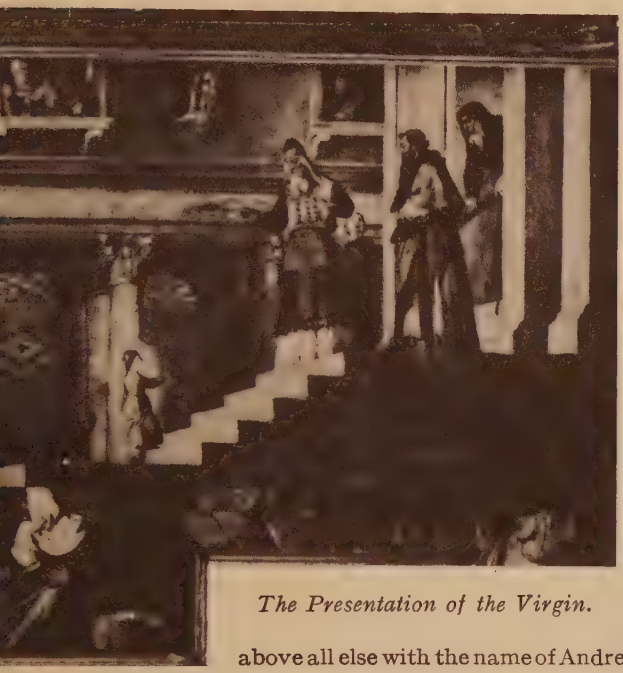
specially attractive spots; the vast and spacious *Piazza Campitolle,* the *rendez-vous* of the idle rich, and the *Piazza del Duomo* with the *Cathedral,* the *Municipio* and the *Palazzo dei Rettori.* The *Municipio,* is a modern building but in spite of its Gothic style and its rather violent red walls, it does not unduly clash with the other buildings. As for the *Palazzo dei Rettori,* now the *Prefettura,* it is the most interesting building in Belluno. Commenced about the beginning of the Renaissance, it is



Titian :

attributed to Giovanno Candi, the architect of the delightful spiral staircase in the *Palazzo Contarini dal Bavolo* at Venice. The plan is pleasing, the detail enchanting; the balconies give an impression of dignified grace, all the capitals are different and excellently carved. The whole effect is extraordinarily pleasing. But the charm of Belluno lies in its beautiful situation on a bend of the Piave, on a plateau which commands the valley. The river — up till now an impetuous torrent — here slows down to encircle the town which it seems to leave behind it with regret. One sees its thin blue ribbon shining in the sun in the far distance, almost lost to view on its bed of white pebbles. Two mountain chains protect Belluno and close in its horizons — to the North the Agordine Alps with their clear-cut outline; to the south the wooded and cultivated hills of the fore-Alpine region which separates the valley of the Piave from the plain of Treviso.

It would be strange indeed if an Italian town of the importance of Belluno had not a local artist worthy of mention. In Venetia, where beauty flowered so naturally, where the decorative instinct is inborn, where the humblest citizen knows how to arrange his house and beautify it with balconies and terraces, where even the peasants lay out their gardens with attention to perspective and general effect, Belluno is no exception to the rule. Here as in Tuscany or Umbria one finds few villages which are not attractive and have not some work of art to show. How



The Presentation of the Virgin.

many painters and sculptors, who, in other countries would have left a glorious name, are here hardly to be discovered even by those who seek them, because they worked near neighbours too numerous and too great.

Belluno points proudly to the two Ricci: Sebastiano, an able decorator who worked entirely away from his own country, and his nephew Marco, a landscape painter with a facile brush. But the fame of the town is associated above all else with the name of Andrea Brustolon, whom his compatriots proudly call the Phidias of wood-carvers. His fame has hardly extended beyond this region even though Balzac in *Cousin Pons*, speaks of a frame " carved by the famous Brustolon, the Michael Angelo of wood-carving ". Burckhardt, who is generally so complete, does not mention this artist anymore than he mentions the other curiosities of the city, which I well believe he did not visit. Brustolon belonged to a group of artists who were admirable decorators but nothing more and yet, while instead of carving isolated and pretentious figures, they confined themselves to ornamenting churches and palaces with exquisite gilded stuccos and beautifully carved furniture, they produced works whose magnificence it would be difficult to surpass—altar-pieces, and crucifixes remarkable for the moving expression of the Christ, colonnades, scrolls covered with vines and brambles and grapes, rich escutcheons of Princes or Bishops, beautiful furniture ornamented with flowers, fruit, animals and human figures. The numerous works of Brustolon are scattered through

Tyrol and the Veneto. Some of his compositions are really pictures in high relief; the finest seemed to me those in the church of San Pietro, especially a Crucifixion in which I noticed the noble bearing of the Virgin, and a Magdalen kneeling at the foot of the Cross whose face expressed in a most moving way both tenderness and passionate grief.

Possagno. The Temple of Canova.

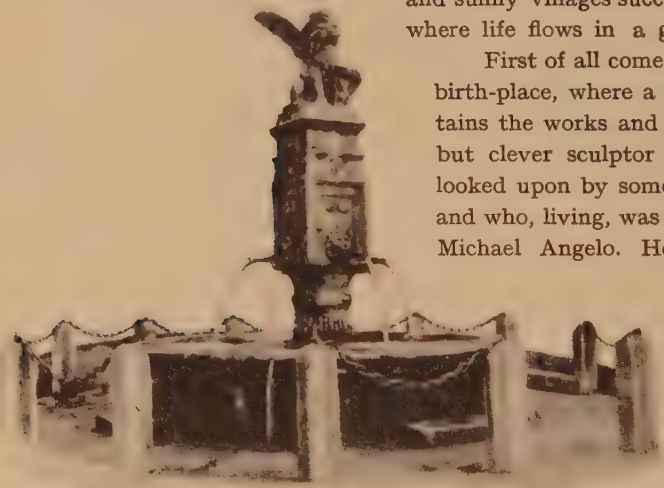
After Belluno the road descends gently all the way to Treviso, following the course of the Piave. The valley is still shut in between high mountains of jagged crests among which one distinguishes the majestic outline of Pizzocco whose peak resembles the horned cap of a Doge. The noad crosses the redoubtable Cordevole — which we saw at its source rear Arabba on the Dolomites road — by a solid stone bridge. A sudden

Assolo. The Hôtel de Ville.

flood on this river, accordingto local tradition, held up the hordes of Attila. In passing we notice the village of Colvago whence the humour of Goldoni found expression and where he wrote the first two of his 150 pieces. After Feltre, an old Roman town finely situated on a height, the valley narrows in to a wild ravine with the tumultuous Piave rushing through it. Then the horizon broadens again. The river spreads out over a stony bed. The vines hang in garlands from tree to tree. Houses and farms are gaily coloured and ornamented with frescoes. Campaniles are seen pushing up through the trees. We are now at the beginning of the great Venetian plain which stretches as far as the eye can reach, to the foot of the last outposts of the Alps. Gentle green hills link the mountains to the

The Brenta at Bassano.

plain, which is covered with bright little villages, churches, villas, fields of vines and olives. On the last heights, sheltered from the North winds, and looking out over the vast horizon of the Veneto, a series of towns and sunny villages succeed each other, places where life flows in a gentle even rhythm.



First of all comes Possagno, Canova's birth-place, where a classical temple contains the works and the tomb of this cold but clever sculptor who even to-day is looked upon by some as one of the great and who, living, was spoken of as the new Michael Angelo. He is, however, now considered a mushroom genius and of his ephemeral glory scarce a memory remains.

Bassano. Porta della Grazie.

If, as told by George Sand in her *Lettres d'un voyageur*, it is true that the marble temple built after a model of the Pantheon was constructed by Canova with a philanthropic motive — to attract large numbers of forei-

gners and travellers to Possagno and thus to create trade and a means of livelihood for the poor inhabitants of the mountain regions, these to-day must be much disillusioned. Wat is truly magnificent is the situation of the temple and the view from the terrace which lies in front of it. Beyond the first flowering slope which falls away at your feet you may see the vast Venetian plain strewn with villages, from which emerge bell towers rosy in the morning light and on a clear horizon Venice and the Adriatic.

Then comes laughing Asolo, set astride on the cool hills, where so many English and Americans have made their homes and here in the beautiful cemetery lies — peaceful at last — the mortal remains of the immortal Duse.

Bassano is one of the small towns of Venetia which I love best. Beautifully situated at the point where the Brenta flows out into the plain, it has an atmosphere of old nobility with its ivy clad ramparts, its moated promenade planted with great limes, its castle with square

Marostica. Vicence Gateway and the Castle.

Marostica. Piazza Victor-Emmanuel and the Ramparts.

turrets, which recall its warlike past, and, above all, the old covered bridge whose history is so intimately bound up with that of the town. Not so long but broader than the famous bridge of Pavia, it makes a lovely and complete picture of the town with its tiers of gardens and its houses coming down to the water, which at times strikes with no little force at their foundations. High up, above the roofs and the trees, rises the ancient citadel while the whole hill is reflected in the waters below.

Then there is Marostica with its noble ramparts and Breganze where I write these lines in the scent of the last of the jasmine and the first blooms of the olea fragrans.